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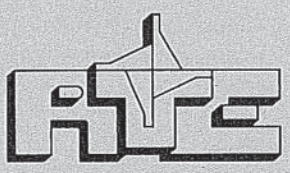

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The European Media Programme – A Producer's Experience

Gerry Gregg is Managing Director of Vermillion Films.

Gerry Gregg

In 1988 the European Media programme was launched to encourage film and television production in Europe for European audiences. The same year the Irish Film Board was abolished.

As 1992 approached, such was the perceived success of the Media Programme, the European Commission decided to extend and expand the media initiative until 1995. Meanwhile, in Ireland the Government had followed up the coup de grace on the Film Board with the cap on RTE advertising revenue. Ostensibly the cap was designed to encourage advertisers to place their bets on the new national independent radio channels airtime and on TV3. By January 1992, the planned private commercial and TV channel TV3 was a non-runner and the private national radio channel Century had pulled up with considerable losses. Twelve months later the cap is still in place, RTE have scaled down dramatically its purchase of independently produced programmes and Europe is the only friend most Irish producers have.[1]

1. This article was written in January 1993 prior to the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board and the removal of the cap (restricting advertising on RTE).

In 1988 I was selected to participate in the inaugural EAVE programme. This project was designed to encourage producer training by selecting participants with programme ideas, film treatments, documentary proposals, etc. and subjecting their ideas, budgets, talent, choice etc. to expert scrutiny in the course of intense marathon seminars held in hotels in remote locations. Of the twenty projects selected that year, at least three went into production - Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels* and Jaco Van Dormael's *Toto the Hero* being the most notable. My project was a Russian road movie to be directed by John T. Davis as a sequel to his acclaimed film *Route 66*. Despite good reaction, the absence of substantial national support for the project ultimately sealed its fate. This is a recurring theme in all my experiences with Europe. The Irish end constantly collapses under the strain of insufficient finance, resources or commitment.

In 1989 SCRIPT was launched. SCRIPT awarded me £15,700 to develop a screenplay on the life of International Brigader and Republican Frank Ryan. The research for this film took us to Berlin, Spain, the United States and Britain and a screenplay was delivered without any support from any Irish source with the exception of Bord Tráchtála who financed the air fares to Spain, Germany and the US and allowed us access to phone and fax facilities in their New York office. The Ryan story was rejected by the Arts Council for script support and RTE passed on the project. Attempts to interest private investors proved fruitless. Again a strong Irish story which attracted the support of German and Spanish co-producers was stalled at the script stage due to the absence of support from any Irish backer. Since 1989 Ireland has received proportionately more SCRIPT awards than any other country. Yet to my knowledge only one film has gone into production and an Irish script mountain is getting higher and higher.

1989 saw the launch of EUROAIM. EUROAIM's brief is to encourage the sale and marketing of European productions. While EUROAIM's main event is the annual MIP showcase in Cannes, it also hosts the Donostia Screenings every autumn in Spain.

In 1989 our film on the veterans of the International Brigade 'The Last Parade' was chosen for this inaugural showcase and we have been selected every year with documentary films on Northern Ireland, labour history and the experience of Protestants in the Republic. The material has not sold to any territories outside the UK but

EUROAIM has, like all the other European schemes, enabled us to meet producers with similar interests and editorial sympathies and Euroaim has proved to be, as has EAVE, a spawning ground for co-production ideas and partnerships.

Last year I was asked to produce a documentary film on Luke Kelly in association with EXPOSURE Film and Video's Jack Talbot. That year also saw the DOCUMENTARY initiative of the Media '95 programme launched. We successfully applied for a 10,000 ecu development loan. This allowed us to research the early career of Luke Kelly in Britain and meet possible co-producers. To date, Channel 4 has expressed a willingness to put up approximately half the total budget of £140,000. However, before Christmas RTE informed us that they would not be getting involved due to 'financial constraints'. Thus a film to mark the anniversary of Luke Kelly's death, one of Ireland's most loved entertainers will probably not now be made unless the cap is lifted or else a commercial investor can be found for the project.

The European Media Programme has proved an invaluable source of contacts and professional affirmation. Amid all the 'No' letters from RTE and the Arts Council, it is encouraging when one comes across a letter from Europe saying 'we like your script - here's 10,000 ecu' to develop it or, 'we like your film and we are going to screen it at the next EUROAIM event'.

The frustrating aspect of all this for us and for the EC's Media Programme, is that the Irish independent producer gets little or no support from a philistine state, from a penny pinching national broadcaster and from an Arts Council that is committed to primarily supporting 'experimental' films. In most other European countries these are the primary sources of finance for producers. In Ireland as Derry O'Brien has said at a recent 'Sharing Stories' seminar in Edinburgh - 'RTE is increasingly the broadcaster of last resort for Irish independents'. The admirable success of some producers in obtaining funds from private investors under the provisions of Section 35 of the Finance Act is no excuse for the state evading its responsibilities in this important cultural sphere. Section 35 funding is unlikely to be a real runner for most of us engaged in documentary and low budget drama production.

Since 1988 the European Community has been a substantial source of support and encouragement to Irish producers. It has been a beacon of hope in a landscape of gloom and doom. However, as Irish governments continue to have a begging bowl mentality in relation to Europe the idea of matching a European pound with an Irish pound continues to be unpalatable. As long as that culture of dependency continues Irish producers will continue to pile up good scripts and ideas onto an ever growing paper mountain. Maybe it is time Europe had a word in Albert's ear about where some of the £8b should go. The abolition of the cap, the restoration of a National Film Board and and the enforcement of the spirit of the EC ten per cent quota directive for independents from the £80m spent annually by RTE on television production would go a long way towards transforming a lot of those scripts and ideas into movies and jobs.

Through a Glass, Darkly - Reflections on Secrecy and Censorship in Ireland

Paddy Smyth is a journalist with *The Irish Times* and one of the organisers of the 'Let in the Light' conference on censorship, secrecy and democracy, January 1993.

Paddy Smyth

Colour pictures produced in the minds of people,
Especially in the minds (if any) of young people,
A serious distortion of reality;
Colour pictures showed reality to be rich and various
Whereas reality in point of fact was the opposite...

Paul Durcan, 'Irish Hierarchy Bans Colour Photography'

Censorship, whether justifiable or not, is first and foremost a denial of a part of reality. In Ireland traditionally, it has been about the denial of the sensual. Today, less so. Our censors in 1993 are concerned predominantly with the consequences of sex and the causes of political violence. Above all, they are driven by the conviction that supposedly unshakeable value systems will fail the test of contact with the harshness of real life, and that people are so weak-willed, that they, like children, must be protected from their baser instincts, for their own good. People must be protected from making 'wrong' decisions. But, the tide is turning, and, to a great extent, the 1992 election could be interpreted as an appraisal on the charmed, closed, golden circles of our rulers who have looked into their hearts and known what the Irish people 'really' wanted.

Our censors are not only those who take a blue pen to books or scissors to a film. They are not confined to the bureaucrats who tell us whom we may or may not listen to on the radio. They are also the politicians and the businessmen who conceal from ordinary people the true relationships of power, the inner workings of government, and the great institutions that rule our lives. That is why the inevitable corollary of freedom of speech is freedom of information, and why the issue of freedom of information has become central to the Irish political agenda.

The Fianna Fail-Labour Party Programme for Government (1993-1997) promises new registers of interests, new ethical guidelines for politicians, new legislation on abortion information, possibly a review of Section 31, and an examination of the feasibility of a freedom of information bill. These proposals have emanated from a series of public scandals which would have been sufficient to bring down a government elsewhere. They involve allegations of misappropriation of public and corporate funds, political influence, corruption, and the 'sectarian' basis of legislation, involving, inter alia, Dublin's planning and development process, the Allied-Irish Bank/Insurance Corporation of Ireland (1985), Greencore/formerly Irish Sugar Company (1991), Telecom (1991), Goodman International and the subsequent Beef Tribunal (1990-1993), the banning of abortion information, the 'X' case involving a thirteen year old rape victim seeking an abortion in Britain (1992), and missing Galway diocesan funds (1993). In most cases, freedom of information, or more accurately, the lack of it in major institutions has become a central issue.

In the US, protection of freedom of the press afforded by the First Amendment of the Constitution has been interpreted broadly. US courts have clearly seen that protection of a journalist's sources are crucial to the functioning of a free press. In sharp contrast, Irish courts and the Law Reform Commission have indicated that they see no such connection. The Beef Tribunal, which has raised a plethora of related issues and owes its origins to the work of an investigative journalist casting light into dark recesses, has

ended up threatening the prosecution of that same journalist for doing what her professional code tells her - refusing to reveal sources. Nevertheless, journalists, for whom confidential relationships with sources are an indispensable, routine part of everyday work, will continue, unlike any other profession, to teach students that it is not only right but their duty to defy the courts over a central tenet of their professional ethics.

The courts' and the politicians' view of journalistic privilege reflects a deep antipathy to the media which are seen as an essentially parasitical and prurient force whose grubby presence must be tolerated, but no more. Such a view finds its expression in contempt of court rules, defamation, gagging writs, in camera rules, and bureaucratic secrecy surrounding court documents. An important decision early in 1993 against *The Irish Times* has now removed the protection of privilege from the reporting of preliminary summons. Newspapers will now not be able to publish allegations made in documents which form the basis of legal proceedings until the paper itself is satisfied that it can prove the allegations in a court of law or the allegations have actually come before a court. Otherwise, they face the threat of an action for defamation.

While the reasoning of the court is understandable, and its purpose worthy - to remove the protection of privilege from those who want to make wild allegations that they do not really intend to pursue in court - the effect of the ruling is once again to shift the balance against the rights of the press, and more importantly, the public's right to know. Given the slowness of the courts in civil matters, the result will almost certainly be to postpone public knowledge of scandals - and thus to protect the authors of wrongdoing. In this case, as in others, the real remedy lies with the courts and the legislature. By speeding up the process of trial and introducing some deterrents to vexatious summonses, the courts could achieve the desired result without undermining public access to their workings. But, the easier solution is always to put the onus on the press to hush things up.

In 1991, frustrated by the supposed effects of opinion polls on voters, the Government sought to ban them in the run-up to elections. There were suggestions from the same quarter that TDs would be able to decide how much of their proceedings should be reported. The instinct to shoot the messenger runs very deep in Irish life. Likewise, following revelations about irregularities in the beef industry, several politicians suggested that it was unpatriotic to write disparagingly about the industry. Ultimately, however, the Tribunal may prove to be a watershed in opening up Irish society. Apart from the case of Susan O'Keeffe - the journalist who exposed wrong-doing on the ITV programme *World in Action* - it has also exposed the scandalous inadequacy of the laws governing the disclosure of political donations and brought about an absurd ruling on Cabinet confidentiality (routinely broken by politicians, at their own whim, in the political lobby, but not where they might be seriously questioned, as at the Tribunal).

At stake is far more than the ability of journalists to do their job properly. It concerns the transparency of transactions entered into by politicians or business people or even clergy on behalf of ordinary citizens, shareholders, employees or church members. These issues of censorship and information are not disparate ones but part of a single issue. For too long, arguments such as those against Section 31[1] have been seen to be made largely by those against whom it is intended while the case against restrictions on abortion information has been supported mainly by those who favour the right to choose abortion. It is, however, quite consistent to argue that one does not have to approve of the disruption of church services in order to disapprove of the barbaric use of 19th century legislation to imprison a harmless, sad woman for three months for shouting at Mass. It is also quite consistent to argue that although the military campaign of groups in Northern Ireland may be repulsive, the articulation of their viewpoint, unpleasant as it may be, should be allowed.

Salmon Rushdie has argued that the test of an open democracy is to allow the airing of the difficult, even the unpleasant. Such tolerance strengthens democracy, even if it

1. Section 31, Broadcasting Act 1960, 1976.

causes affront, precisely because it exposes people to a reality they may not wish to confront - the reality of people holding such views, not necessarily their correctness. Rushdie has further asserted the right to call for his own assassination as long as it was not done when he was in the room. The crime was to plan or carry out the assassination not the misguided and inflammatory call.

Yet, even such an extreme libertarian position accepts that there are some limits. The vast majority of people accept the need to protect children and to prevent someone from being allowed falsely to shout 'fire' in a crowded room. But this complexity also makes the ground dangerously subjective. Is not a call from the former 'Birmingham 6' Paddy Hill, in Derry, to send British soldiers home in boxes akin to shouting fire in a crowded room? Perhaps. But the case against censorship and for freedom of information is not that there should be *no* limits, but an argument about where the limits are now drawn. In a huge range of areas, it is too restrictive and paternalistic.

Rather, the debate is about setting *new* limits, a more difficult job than that faced by traditional human rights groups like Amnesty. Either one is for or against torture - to argue for less torture is patently absurd. But to make the case for an alternative to the existing Section 31 poses such a question: interpreting it more liberally, total repeal, replacement with another clause, or self-regulation by a broadcasting authority. The latter combined with the use of existing anti-incitement legislation might provide the optimum solution.

A similar complexity applies to abortion information, freedom of information and to the disclosure of political donations, etc. In the latter case, Fintan O'Toole has speciously argued in *The Irish Times* that simple disclosure will in fact do more harm than good as politicians will then know for certain who has contributed to their party (as if they do not already). He suggests instead that there should be a complete ban on substantial donations to parties and for state funding.

The debate on pornography is even more divided. The existence of a causal connection between violence against women and pornography is still debatable. But even if established, it begs a whole range of questions. We accept that cars on our roads will kill hundreds of people every year, yet do not ban them. Society makes a crude calculation of the acceptable number of deaths and then sets speed and safety limits accordingly. The argument, again, is about where to draw the line when conflicting rights or rights and convenience clash.

These positions reflect an increasing view among many in Irish society that the days of secrecy are over, that people must be allowed to take decisions or make mistakes for themselves, that we have acquired the maturity to live with the unpleasant or shocking, resisting the simplistic, often comfortable, paternalism both of the old order and of its new 'politically correct' adherents. In the words of Joseph Pulitzer:

> There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy. Get these things out in the open, describe them, attack them, ridicule them in the press and sooner or later public opinion will sweep them away. Publicity may not be the only thing that is needed, but it is the one thing without which all other agencies will fail.

The road ahead will be bumpy.

Seamus White has an MBS from University College, Dublin and an MA in Film and Television Studies at Dublin City University.

Independent Local Radio: How Local?

Seamus White

Introduction

1988 marked a new era in Irish broadcasting history. Up until then independent broadcasting services consisted of unlicenced and unregulated pirate radio stations. The 1988 Radio and Television Act created the Independent Radio and Television Commission, giving it powers to establish and supervise legal and independent local radio. By the end of 1991, twenty one such local stations were in operation. In deciding who would be awarded local radio franchises, the 1988 Act instructed the IRTC to take into consideration a range of criteria. Judging from the guide which the IRTC provided for applicants and the nature of the questioning at the hearings which preceded final selection of franchise holders, it would appear that the criterion relating to 'good economic principles' was regarded as most significant. Indeed most of the questions at the hearings related to the market analysis which prospective candidates were expected to provide. The IRTC's guide was much less concerned with production plans and actual programming. The main stipulation regarding programming in the 1988 Act itself was that twenty per cent of programming be given over to news and current affairs. Regulations regarding impartiality and censorship were to be similar to those covering RTE. While the contracts between the IRTC and the licence-holders allow the former to set out certain rules regarding the quality, range and type of programmes broadcast no such rules have been issued to date. The 1988 Act does mention the desirability of having a diversity of programming, catering for minority and local interests. However such considerations are mentioned as criteria for selecting licencees, but not as regulations to which successful applicants must adhere.

This study considers the degree to which local radio stations in Ireland can justifiably be titled 'local'. In the absence of any meaningful regulations regarding the nature of programmes which these stations would have to broadcast (in order to deserve the title 'local') I have used as my benchmark the aforementioned criteria for selection cited in the 1988 Radio and Television Act. By implication the legislation set out to create a system of local radio which, inter alia, would provide:

- A wide range and type of programming;
- Programmes in the Irish language, particularly for franchise areas which included the Gaeltacht regions;
- Programmes relating to 'Irish Culture';
- Opportunities for Irish talent in music, drama and entertainment;
- A diversity of programmes for a wide range of tastes, including minority;
- A service which was recognizably local and which was supported by the community (presumably in terms of participation, amongst other things).

The Monitoring Exercise

In order to consider the nature of programmes broadcast by local radio and their attempts (if any) to cater for specific needs and interests, the output of three local stations (North West Radio, LM FM and 98FM Dublin) was recorded and analyzed.

Among the three stations North West Radio broadcasts for the least amount of hours per day (07.00-01.00hrs) and since it was the first station to be monitored it was decided that the other two stations be monitored for the same hours on consecutive Mondays. An item by item summary sheet was made for each station's output and programming was then categorized, where possible, into the following types:

1. *Music-based Programmes*

Each programme was examined with reference to the following:

a) D.J. continuity, type of music played and origins of records (ie foreign or domestic artists);

b) Dedications and requests for records;

c) Meaningful speech, information provided;

d) Specialist music programmes.

2. *Magazine/Feature Programmes*

Programmes which are advertised as such often contain a large music content and thus these programmes are examined in much the same way as music-led programming. In addition these programmes are examined in terms of content, structure, range of opinions, depth of research and explanation of issues.

3. *News and Current Affairs*

The paucity of analysis offered for 98FM's output is a result of the homogeneous nature of that station's programming.

North West Radio

North West Radio was the last of the country's independent local stations to come on air. It commenced broadcasting on 2 November 1990. Based in Sligo, the station has a catchment area encompassing Sligo, North Leitrim and South Donegal. It is the first commercial franchise area where a licence has been awarded to a consortium which includes groups already involved in independent broadcasting. The franchise was originally awarded to Rosses Regional Radio, but was later handed back to the Commission because of Rosses' belief that the venture could not succeed in the medium or long term. The consortium which took over the franchise is partly owned by neighbouring Mid-West Radio. Indeed, the two stations share the same chief executive. Programmes are also shared between the two stations with twelve hours programming coming from the Sligo studios and six from Mid-West. The stations 'split out' for an hour and a half each day to broadcast their own programmes.

Programmes based primarily on music formed just under seventy per cent of the material broadcast on Monday, 29 June. Commercially produced Country and Western and Middle of the Road (MOR) records formed the foundation of most of the daytime music programmes, while much of the evening was taken up with 'specialist' music programmes, including *Pick of the Pops* and *Fleadh Cheol*. The speech content of these programmes consisted primarily of requests and dedications for listeners. Otherwise there were no obvious links made between records, with the exception of the *John Duggan Show* (which contained an interview with a studio guest), and *Fleadh Cheol* (studio guests). Presenters appeared to say the first thing entering their head. The introduction to the *Lyons mid-Morning Show* provides an example of this phenomenon:

> Between now and one, there's a lot of good music on the programme, I'm not sure about the mayhem ... there will probably be a bit of madness all right but nevertheless we'll keep you company or do our

best to keep you company'.

DJs also provided a steady stream of banal comments on records which they played:

> Here is a song that will shake the milk in your cornflakes... that's music from 1976 and a great hit it was ... seems like an extended version of that song ...

Occasionally presenters did provide information on local events but overall what the Local Radio Workshop refers to as 'DJ Prattle' predominated. A recurring feature in the day time music programmes was the 'surprise telephone call' to the unsuspecting listener:

Presenter: Is that Miss Ellie? Happy Birthday... how are things?

Listener: Not too bad ...

Presenter: Did you think you'd see the big '80'?

Listener: I did not, it's too old!

Presenter: The older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune! What do you do with yourself? Do you go out for walks?

Listener: I do.

Presenter: Do you live on your own?

Listener: Oh, no ... with Paddy and Willy.

Presenter: And you have a little pension every Friday... puts the Connaught Gold on the table!

By far the most innovative music-based programme appearing on the day in question was *Fleadh Cheol.* Comhaltas Ceoltéoirí were invited into studio to put on a live programme of 'traditional music and traditional song'. In all, six guests played or sang eighteen numbers. A detailed 'Event Guide' for traditional music, song and dance was also presented, mentioning events such as summer schools, ceilí, fleadh festivals and Irish dancing classes. Another unique feature of this programme was the use of the cúpla focail.

Two magazine/feature programmes were broadcast by NWR, *Talkabout* and *Farming Matters.* While *Talkabout* was billed as an information/chat-show, most of the ninety minute programme was actually devoted to music. Items which did appear included a fifteen minute pre-recorded discussion between the presenter and four people involved in a local summer project. There was also a 'Health Spot' where a local doctor gave some basic advice for listeners planning to holiday abroad:

> Be careful of the water, standards vary... maybe bring along a holiday first aid kit ...

Little research would have been needed prior to both items and at no stage were listeners invited or allowed to make a contribution to discussions. The rest of the speech content of the programme consisted of short references to the weather and sport. While advertised as an information programme for farmers, *Farming Matters* could also be categorized as a current affairs programme. One third of the programme was devoted to a well researched 'question-and-answer' feature on the issue of headage and premium payments and entitlements and applications for such payments. The rest of the programme was taken up with two telephone interviews, one with a local vet and the other with a local opposition T.D. Issues under discussion included proposals for the setting up of a Regional Technical College in Mayo, cattle diseases, the closure of a local meat factory and the Green Paper on Education. Overall, the content of the programme was related directly to issues and problems of intrinsic interest to local people. While the

range of opinions sought was very limited, in terms of depth of research and explanation of issues, *Farming Matters* was quite thorough.

While NWR subscribes to the Ireland Radio News service, taking eleven out of a possible eighteen such bulletins, it also provides its own news service. There are three main news programmes produced in-house (between 7.00am and 7.00pm), lasting for two and a half hours. Local bulletins are also provided at 10.00am and 12.00pm. In relation to the IRN bulletins, it was difficult to identify any consistent criteria for news selection. While topics appeared repeatedly in a string of reports, the order was consistently changed. Indeed some reports which appeared early in the day disappeared in the afternoon, only to re-appear in the evening bulletins. Much of NWR's morning news programme consisted of edited news stories taken from IRN but read out by the local presenter. However, the lunchtime news provided a more detailed account of local news. The use of interviews to accompany local stories was also more noticeable. Local sports news was quite thorough with detailed results of local events, together with descriptions of matches and interviews with players. The evening news programme provided, in some cases, an update on stories carried earlier in the day. For example, earlier news bulletins reported that the Taoiseach had yet to make up his mind on the re-appointment of Ray MacSharry (a native of Sligo), as EC Commissioner. The six o'clock news reported that MacSharry wanted to give up the post and carried an interview with him. Overall, NWR does appear to succeed in combining national news sources with local items to give an adequate news service. However, the station is less successful in terms of relating news items to the daily lives of listeners. Little, if any effort was made to ascertain the views of listeners about issues such as factory and school closures which were reported in the news.

LM FM

LM FM came on the air on 27 August, 1989. The station's franchise area includes Louth and Meath. Programmes are broadcast from studios in Drogheda, Dundalk and Navan.

LM FM begins broadcasting at 7.00am with its breakfast programme *Waking up the North-East*. This programme is based around its two presenters, who, between records and features, discuss 'lifestyle' items lifted from the morning newspapers. Items under discussion on this morning included, amongst other things, plastic surgery for men and Croatian cursing:

Male Presenter: Well, what have you got for us this morning?

Female Presenter: Well, would you consider having plastic surgery done? One clinic says that 50 per cent of its nose jobs are on men ... you can have cheek implants ... on your face that is ... or if you are tired with your pecs you can have a pec implant ...

Male Presenter: So what happens when you get tired, you run out of 'pectoral'? Ha, Ha.

No obvious links were made between records or between records and features. What listeners heard could justifiably be termed a 'mindless fun approach'. Examples of continuity between records included

> If I said you had a beautiful body would you hold it against me (title of record)... at twelve after seven on a Monday morning, too much for me!'

With the exception of *Record Review* and *Country and Irish* the other music-led programmes broadcast on LM FM followed a similar pattern of requests and 'surprise phone calls'. However details of local events were occasionally given in a sponsored *Community Diary*. *Country and Irish* can be categorized as a 'specialist' music

programme in that it concentrated solely on country and western music, both domestic and foreign (the rest of LM FM's musical output was mostly made up of contemporary pop and MOR discs). Much of the programme consisted of a studio discussion on emerging trends in the music business and it provided the first evidence that a presenter was actually interested in the music he played. *Record Review* also provided welcome relief from the earlier deluge of DJ-speak. The programme consisted of a both humourous and critical discussion of the records under review. On Madonna's latest record one guest had the following to say:

> Stop this record ... she'll probably do something erotic in the video to help sales ... it's a ridiculous song, totally boring to the end ... you'd go to sleep listening to that ... dreadful ... sad.

The three hour *Ray Stone Programme* was the only programme of the day which attempted to address issues and concerns which might be of direct interest to listeners (other than weather forecasts, music etc.). A studio guest from the local Citizen's Advice Centre dealt with questions from listeners on social welfare entitlements, employment and general rights. A studio discussion, in conjunction with 'Alzheimers Awareness Week' also took place. The discussion centred on the nature of the disease, its symptoms and the problems it caused for sufferers and carers. Meetings and events for the 'Awareness Week' were detailed throughout the remainder of the programme.

LM FM subscribes to the Ireland Radio News, bulletins of which are broadcast on the hour. In addition, the station provides its own local news bulletins at 8.00am and 9.00am together with extended news programmes between 1.30 and 2.00pm (North East To-Day) and between 6.00 and 7.00pm (LM FM Regional News). Almost all local news items were accompanied by interviews. However, while much of the news was presented in terms of conflict, only the views of so-called experts such as politicians, doctors, etc. were sought. The evening news programme did provide a more detailed analysis of issues which had appeared in earlier reports.

98FM (Dublin)

Classic Hits 98FM is licensed to broadcast to Dublin City and County. Its format is 'music-driven adult contemporary', targeting twenty-two to forty-four year olds.

Programmes based on music made up over ninety-five per cent of programming on Monday, 13 July. The speech elements of 98FM's output were confined almost exclusively to promotions for the station in terms of sponsored competitions, concerts, etc. Indeed each time a presenter spoke, he began with the phrase 'Classic Hits 98FM, Dublin's Better Music Mix'. This was related directly to an ongoing competition whereby a listener was 'rewarded' if he or she would answer the phone with the same phrase. On this day there were no winners but in order not to 'discourage' listeners, a recording of a past winner was broadcast on dozens of occasions throughout the day. Listeners were also constantly reminded by each presenter to listen out for a 'key' song:

> Key Mania Three ... have you got your key yet ... well every hour we play the key song ... when we play it, if you are the ninth caller on the winning line, we'll organize you with a key which could unlock the door to your very own BMW.

Meaningless jingles such as:

> From a classic movie ... to a classic rock song ... 98FM ... the home of classic rock.

98FM's breakfast programme *The Morning Crew* was centred around the chat between two co-presenters. On this occasion they discussed their weekend activities. The presenter of the mid-morning programme announced 98FM's new 'Reaction Line... from the station which listens to its listeners'. That day's topic was the Beef Tribunal,

callers were invited to explain what it was all about. Several minutes later we were informed that no-one had phoned up with any suggestions. The presenter drew several conclusions from the lack of response:

> ...you don't know what it's about, you don't care ... maybe people over in Leinster House should pay attention to that ...

Subject closed.

In terms of information on local and other events, listeners were informed that '98FM supported the Blackrock Festival and our athletes at the Olympics'. No details on either event or what such support might entail was offered. Features which appeared in the rest of the station's music programmes included, amongst other things, a 'Gig Guide', 'Bed Check' (listeners were asked to name their ideal bed partner), and 'Love Song dedications'. In addition to the constant references to competitions being run by the station and to its own call name, programme presenters concentrated on merely naming off records just played. Seldom did they demonstrate much interest in, or knowledge about the music aired. Comments on records did not go beyond:

> I can't dance ... from Genesis ... maybe some dance lessons for the boys.

The only feature programme broadcast on 98FM was an hour long programme, between 10.00 – 11.00pm entitled *Dublin Tonight* with Fr. Michael Cleary. The issue under discussion on this particular evening was the revival of the Christian Churches in the former Soviet Union. The contrast between this programme and the day's other output could not have been greater. While undoubtedly a special interest programme, where the range of views and opinions were quite limited, it did provide an interesting and informative break from that which had come before it. Listeners were also afforded the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the discussion. However, the title *Dublin Tonight* was misleading (on this occasion in any event) in that the programme did not deal with issues of particular relevance to a Dublin audience.

98FM provides its own news service in the form of hourly news bulletins. These lasted an average of four to six minutes. The bulletins at 1.00pm and 6.00pm were slightly longer in length. (Bulletins were also broadcast at 7.30am and 8.30am). In terms of content the station might be said to offer a 'fast food' approach to news. There was little, if any, analysis offered with regard to items broadcast. Every bulletin began with the phrase 'In 98FM news this hour' and the style of what followed suggested that the station was more interested in presenting a packaged four or five minutes of programming and assuring listeners that they were indeed listening to 98FM rather than attempting to inform or enlighten listeners about important news items. With regard to local news, the term seemed a misnomer given the scant attention it received. In most bulletins there was no reference to the capital, and taking the day's news output as a whole there were three items of specifically Dublin news.

Not very local?

All three stations have predominantly music-based programming formats. However, while some attempts are made by NWR and LM FM to cater for music tastes outside of their target age groups, no such attempts are made by 98FM. Indeed, notwithstanding this, it would appear arrogant in the extreme to presume that similar age groups have similar tastes in music. It is also unusual that the IRTC, which (according to legislation) should be striving to create a system of local radio which caters for the widest possible tastes, should allow for specific age targeting formats in the first place. If, as the IRTC contends, the local stations are keeping the programming promises set out in their original applications, then the narrowness of music tastes being catered for, in the case of 98FM, is occurring with the blessing of the IRTC.

Credit should, however, be given to those stations which attempt to cover more than one musical taste. In the case of NWR, most daytime music is MOR and country; 'pop' music and traditional Irish music tastes are catered for in evening programmes. While most of the music broadcast on LM FM was MOR or contemporary pop, a programme devoted exclusively to 'Country and Irish' music was provided. With regard to pop music, LM FM provided a much wider variety (i.e. music for 'teeny-boppers' not just 'thirtysomethings') than the Dublin station. 98FM broadcast, repeatedly in many cases, a narrow playlist of 'adult contemporary' and album based songs. Listeners with a taste for jazz, classical music, opera or blues would have been disappointed with the output (on the days in question) of the three stations. In terms of commentary on records, programme presenters at 98FM never got away from merely listing off discs just played or in some cases, sarcastic comments about the title of songs. While the amount of 'D.J. Prattle' was quite high on the other two stations, they did have some meaningful discussions on music at some point during the day.

In the case of NWR, one evening programme had a guest artist in studio who discussed both the background to her own music and trends in country music in general. Another programme (of live traditional Irish music) provided biographies of artists included in the broadcast. LM FM also devoted a large part of its 'Country and Irish' programme to a discussion with two guest artists about their own music. The station's *Record Review* programme contained an interesting section on changing musical tastes among the 'post teeny-bop generation'. The opinions expressed about records under review were also in stark contrast to the 'adoring' comments of other station presenters.

Programmes in the Irish language were absent from all three stations. 'Cúpla Focail' did appear on NWR's traditional music programme and in the signing-off words of the continuity announcer. Not one word of Irish appeared on LM FM while the word 'Fáilte' was uttered by Fr. Michael Cleary on his 98FM programme (not even Eamonn Mac Thomáis' 'triocha soicind' were included on this particular day). While Tommy Marren (Station Manager, NWR) admits that his station should be including more Irish language programming, given that NWR's franchise area in Donegal includes Gaeltacht areas, he is of the belief that very few people are interested in learning the Irish language. He fails to mention those (outside of the Gaeltacht) who might actually be able to speak the language already. (However, to be fair, NWR's schedule did indicate that a two hour weekend traditional music programme is presented bilingually). Jeff O'Brien (Director of Programmes, 98FM) argues that while he does not have a problem with the Irish language if it is done in the right way he does not believe that listeners would be prepared to listen to more than a couple of minutes in Irish. Michael O'Keefe (IRTC Chief Executive) sees the lack of Irish programming as a result of the conflict between minority interests and the commercial nature of stations.

If one takes 'programmes relating to Irish culture' to refer to programmes which contain a distinctly Irish flavour (whether in terms of the arts, music, etc.) such programmes were almost completely absent. Again programmes which did have a distinctly Irish content included NWR's *Fleadh Cheol* and LM FM's *Country and Irish* programme. If one takes the interest which many people in rural Ireland have in attending funerals as a uniquely Irish trait, then the death and funeral announcements broadcast on NWR and LW FM could constitute programmes (or features) relating to Irish culture; such notices are among the most popular features in these stations. One would need to define Irish culture in very bland and homogeneous terms if one considered 98FM's output as 'relating' in anyway to Irish culture.

In terms of opportunities for Irish talent in music, drama and entertainment, O'Keefe judges the station a success given that the industry as a whole has created 650 jobs. However, notwithstanding the contribution which local radio does make to employment levels, the criterion on opportunities for Irish talent would suggest that the 1988 Act had more in mind the degree to which the local radio would and should promote Irish music, Irish talent and Irish drama. Of the one hundred and seventy eight records played on

NWR (on the day and time period of monitoring), fifty were by Irish artists, a rate of approximately twenty eight per cent. LM FM played one hundred and eighty six records, twenty six of which were by Irish artists (14 per cent). 98FM played twelve records by Irish artists out of one hundred and seventy eight records aired on the relevant day (under 7 per cent). NWR's *Fleadh Cheol* and *John Duggan at Home* programmes did concentrate exclusively on Irish records and Irish talent. Both programmes had Irish music artists in studio. These artists were afforded the opportunity to promote their records and their musical talent. Similarly LM FM's *Country and Irish* programme was explicit in its support for Irish artists, two of whom appeared in studio. 98FM's policy on Irish music?

> It's a very difficult area ... from time to time we do play an Irish song that we know is not going to be accepted by our listeners ... but we play it just to try and give someone a leg up ... to be seen to be playing Irish music ... you know, in research, they (listeners) say if you keep playing that music [U2's *Achtung Baby*] we will turn off your station.

It is interesting that the only artist named by O'Brien (in relation to a question on opportunities for Irish talent) was U2, the most commercially successful Irish band.

While the three stations do provide opportunities for Irish talent in entertainment, through the employment of programme presenters (that they do in fact entertain is obviously a matter of opinion), opportunities for talent in drama are much less apparent. None of the stations carried any drama features. However, North West Radio does in fact broadcast plays (by amateur drama groups) every winter. Drama groups are given access to studio facilities to record hour long plays. These are broadcast through the winter months (depending on the number of drama groups which apply) culminating in a radio drama awards programme which is broadcast live from a local hotel. Such an innovation is most heartening for those seeking meaningful participation in the output of local stations.

With regard to the provision of a 'diversity of programmes for a wide range of tastes, including minority tastes' none of the three stations performed particularly well. Given that the three stations earmarked between just under 70 per cent to over 95 per cent (98FM came at the higher end of the scale) of their schedules to music-based programmes, the opportunities to provide a diversity of programmes were limited. However, where stations did provide programmes other than music, the result was quite encouraging. As referred to earlier in the text, 98FM's *Dublin Tonight* programme did provide both an interesting and informative hour of radio which contrasted greatly with the other seventeen hours of homogeneous programming monitored. NWR's *Farming Matters* programme was the station's strongest, in terms of meaningful speech content. While essentially designed to inform and advise on farming matters, the programme did not shy away from dealing with topics which were of relevance to a wider audience (issues such as education, employment, etc.). LM FM's sympathetic treatment of Alzheimer's disease in it's *Ray Stone* magazine programme was an example of how the stations could successfully provide items other than music. Notwithstanding Fr. Cleary's programme on 98FM, this station provided listeners with the narrowest range of programmes of the three stations. Indeed, on being asked to provide a schedule of the station's daily output the Programme Director replied:

> We don't have one ... our programmes are all the same.

The final (specific) criterion for awarding of radio franchises directs the IRTC to have regard to:

> The extent to which the service proposed serves recognisably local communities and is supported by the various interests in the community ...

In judging the adequacy of a station's output in relation to the above criterion I have measured their programme content against the degree to which the stations:

- Allow community groups to participate in programmes;
- Take account of, and broadcast, the views and opinions of the local listenership;
- Deal with issues and problems of particular relevance to the franchise area;
- Publicize local events and undertakings.

In spite of O' Brien's contention that:

> We (98FM) with every possibility we get ... want to talk about or give the feeling that we are Dublin ... every chance we get to be 'Dublin' we will be ...

98FM fails miserably to reflect or present a particular 'Dublin' ethos in it is programming. While the station relentlessly promotes itself as 'Dublin's Station' it never goes far beyond merely informing listeners about the weather and traffic news. On the day in question, 98FM's 'Community Diary' publicized one event, Quiz Night. We were informed that 98FM was supporting 'the Blackrock Festival'. What the festival, or support for it, entailed, was never divulged. Listener participation was almost exclusively confined to invitations to answer quiz questions (other 'phone-up' items, such as the 'bedcheck' were detailed earlier in the text). There was little reference to Dublin news in news bulletins, except for three crimes which had recently taken place. Issues discussed in *Dublin Tonight* could not be said to have had particular relevance to the area. 'Nothing local about it' – the Local Radio Workshop's assessment of London's local radio stations – could justifiably denote 98FM's output.

Interestingly, the two most successful programmes on NWR, in terms of meeting the criteria of the 1988 Act, were both presented and researched by local community groups: *Fleadh Cheol* (Comhaltas Ceoltéoirí) and *Farming Matters* (Sligo branch of the Irish Farmers Association). While the views and opinions of ordinary listeners were not in evidence, issues of direct relevance to the area (school closures, job losses) were discussed with local representatives. Many local events were also signposted throughout the day, along with information as to how listeners could become involved.

There were few examples of direct participation by listeners in LM FM's programmes, but the station did provide air time to local groups and representatives to inform listeners about issues such as the care of sick relatives, social welfare entitlements and local events. Its news coverage also provided some degree of analysis (but only through the use of extracts from interviews with local politicians etc.)

Because 98FM's programming consisted almost exclusively of wall to wall music, fast food news and continuous promotions and reminder of the station name (all accompanied by meaningless continuity), it is quite likely that the positive elements of the other two stations, in terms of variety of programming and reflection of locality have been exaggerated. Indeed, it is important to reiterate that programmes and features (on NWR and LM FM) which did cater for tastes other than those of the target audience, which supported Irish talent or which reflected particularly 'local' concerns, were the exception rather than the rule.

Before the introduction of independent local radio (and notwithstanding the then existence of pirate radio stations) the monopoly position which RTE then enjoyed was much criticized. The 1988 Radio and Television Act set out to break that monopoly by providing for the establishment, amongst other things, of legal local radio stations throughout the State. However, a fact which is often overlooked, particularly by the radio stations themselves, is that most local stations constitute monopolies in their own franchise areas, in terms of their ability to serve (or nor to serve) local concerns. According to Jeff O'Brien:

(98FM) is a business the same as a guy down the road who opens a clothes shop.

If, however, the clothes shop owner sells only one range of clothing another person can come along and open a shop which caters for a wider and more diverse set of tastes. This, however, is not the case in local radio. Local radio stations have, in effect, been awarded licences for fourteen years (a seven year contract which contains an option for renewal for a further seven years). Since many local stations do enjoy this monopoly situation (notwithstanding their competition with national radio) should they not also be required by law to reflect the interests of and provide programming for all groups in their area. Such a move might not be required if the 'up to 100 neighbourhood (community) radio stations and community of interest stations' promised when the 1988 Act was being debated were actually set up. While a community station has recently begun broadcasting in the Dublin area such a development is not envisaged outside the capital (that the capital was in dire need of such a service, as compared with elsewhere, is indeed clear from this study). In the absence of such a development and given the experimental nature of the plan of the new Dublin station, it is imperative that the criteria used in the selection of licencees be enforced as regulations.

In the absence of such a move we might well rejoice the 'second coming' of the pirates.

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Interviews

Tommy Marren, Station Manager NWR
Jeff O'Brien, Director Of Programmes 98FM
Michael O'Keefe, Chief Executive IRTC

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Social Scientists and Journalists: Are the Former Really so Different from the Latter?

Liz Fawcett

Introduction

As a journalist who has recently begun carrying out sociological research, I have been struck by the parallels between social science and journalism. I have also been intrigued by some sociological studies of the media which seem to me to suggest that we are little more than a bunch of jumped-up charlatans. This article seeks to examine whether journalism is, in fact, so very different from the social sciences and to ask what might motivate some social scientists to wish to establish a firm differential between the two occupations.

'Objectivity' versus 'Validity' and 'Reliability'

Many sociological studies of the media tend to focus on the idea that journalists cling to the notion of 'objectivity' or related ideals such as 'impartiality or neutrality' as if the profession would fall apart without them. In my own experience, journalists, who are by nature sceptical about everything, are actually very sceptical about the idea that we can be truly objective. Nevertheless, social scientists have rightly pointed out that journalists use objectivity in the form of 'letting the facts speak for themselves' as a protective device behind which they can take refuge. As E. Barbara Phillips puts it:

> Letting 'the facts speak for themselves' instead of offering an interpretation of events avoids controversy which, in turn, avoids offending news (and advertising) consumers who may reject the news (and advertised) product along with the unwanted interpretation. By 'sticking to the facts' and eschewing explicit explanation, journalism in the objective mode skirts the problem that one person's truth is another's propaganda.
>
> (Phillips 1977: 68)

Journalists have constructed a further protective cover for themselves in the form of 'news values' which, as Stuart Hall quite correctly comments, remains an elusive notion:

> 'news values' are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society. All 'true journalists' are supposed to possess it: few can or are willing to identify and define it. Journalists speak of 'the news' as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the 'most significant' news story, and which 'news angles' are most salient are divinely inspired.
>
> (Hall 1988: 234)

However, if 'news values' are intangible to the outsider, the manner in which newspapers, broadcasting stations and individual journalists organize themselves tends to be clearly defined. These 'routine modes of processing different kinds of news stories' (Tuchman, 1977: 48) have also been highlighted by social scientists as another means by which journalists give their work credibility. They include such practices as making check calls with the fire service and the police, asking certain standard questions when

speaking to information sources and adopting different approaches to 'hard' and 'soft' news stories.

One of the customs most faithfully adhered to is that of attribution to sources; 'a government spokesman said', 'security sources say' etc. This is, of course, yet another protective device, helping to ensure that the journalist does not have to take ultimate responsibility if the attributed statement is factually incorrect.

The 'routinization' of journalism is also apparent in the way the finished product is presented. As Phillips notes, there are fixed formats for newspaper and TV stories. These, she says, allow journalists to judge their output through set criteria. (Phillips, 1977: 69-70). Standardization is also imposed in terms of limits on the amount of space a story is given. This frequently means, as any reporter will testify, that 'good quotes' or facts viewed by the journalist as pertinent, have to be left out.

Here we have, then, a set of 'professionals' who dress up their work with an elaborate series of routinized practices designed to lend some spurious weight to their haphazard doings. Just in case this alone fails to fool the public, a mystery ingredient – 'news values' – is added in; an ingredient which, rather conveniently, is never explained and yet has to be fully understood by anyone wishing to call themselves a journalist. It is hardly surprising then, that journalism has provided rich pickings for social scientists. But what about the social scientists? Are they so very different from journalism? Might not some of the above observations apply equally to their practitioners?

While journalists talk of 'objectivity' and 'impartiality', social scientists hold to the ideals of 'reliability' and 'validity'. However, just like journalists, social scientists rely on certain rules of procedure, both in terms of methodology and presentation of findings. Do these routines make the findings of social science worthier than those of journalism?

Phillips maintains that social scientists are encouraged to make their values and beliefs explicit in their work, a practice discouraged in news journalism (Phillips, 1977: 67-8). In my own reading of academic journals, I rarely come across such 'admissions'. Even where they exist, what do they prove? At the end of the day, social scientists – just like journalists – rely on the device of 'letting the facts speak for themselves'. Whether they admit to certain ideological leanings or not, they do interpret their results. However, it is made clear it is for the reader to accept or reject that interpretation. Is that custom so very different from the newspaper editorial which 'interprets' the 'facts' presented in news stories? Is not the understanding also that newspaper readers can agree or disagree with a leader column?

Ah, I hear you say, but there is a difference. What social scientists produce are real facts – what journalists put forward is merely a construction of reality masquerading as 'facts'? Let us look at some of the arguments alluded to above which would bolster that argument and apply them to social science.

Firstly, journalists rely heavily on sources. Do not social scientists? Are academic journals not littered with citations, attributing almost every fact and opinion to someone else (including, of course, numerous references to newspaper articles and news broadcasts)? Secondly, the presentation of news follows a strict format. Again, is that not equally true of academic work? Do not most research reports have an introduction containing a statement of the problem, a literature review, an explanation of the methodology, a summary and then analysis of the findings? In relation to the observation of the restrictions of time and space imposed on journalists — do social scientists send in 12,000 word articles if the journal concerned stipulates a maximum of 6,000 words?

As Jeffrey Katzer et al. have commented:

> 'Not only is every article a shortened version of what occurred, it is also a distorted reconstruction ... The method section usually

> includes only what they actually did – all changes necessitated by poor planning or unexpected events are omitted. When the major results don't come out as expected, the final section of the article may suggest that the minor results are all that matters. And sometimes the entire introduction is written last, giving the impression that the author was in total command of everything that happened and was able to predict all of the results.'
>
> (Katzer et al., 1978: 33)

So, if journalists can be accused of selectivity, might not that criticism apply equally to academics? There is another way in which it could be argued that social scientists can be just as 'selective' as journalists. Like journalists, where they have quotes, they surely select the best ones. Certainly, in my presentation of my own sociological work, I would pick quotes – preferably made with a degree of articulacy – that 'flesh out' my argument. It would seem to me that those social scientists who use quotes at all in the presentation of their work tend to do likewise.

However, selectivity in journalism goes further than just picking quotes. Media sociologists would say that journalists have a selective world-view. For one thing, they generally fail to make connections between different news items, a process which results in what Phillips calls 'a kaleidoscope of unconnected bits and pieces'. (Phillips, 1977: 69). As she rightly says, this practice permits editors to add or drop stories at will. However, sometimes when I am reading academic research I also feel as if I am reading 'a kaleidoscope of unconnected bits and pieces'. So many studies have not been followed up. So many seem to set their own agendas with scant regard for what has gone before or what might come after. Part of the problem here, I believe, is the peer group pressure to have something original to say. All aspiring young academics will know success is more likely if you can find that potential gold mine, an 'under-researched' area. In a sense the problem in social science is quite the opposite of that in journalism. Journalism remains bitty because that suits the organisational needs of the profession. Social science, it could be argued, remains bitty because it has not got itself well enough organised.

'Deviance': A Shared Interest

One important criteria for the selection of stories is the degree to which the events described are unusual, strange, different from the run-of-the-mill. And who decides what is unusual? Why, journalists themselves, of course. Therefore, it is argued, by defining the unusual, they are also constructing a definition of what is normal and acceptable. Thus all crime is outside the media-defined limit of normality. But some crimes get more attention and are thus more 'unusual' or 'deviant' than others – it used to be joyriding and acid house parties, now it is child sex abuse. Rarely has the media spotlight focused for long on motoring offences or tax evasion.

Now, it just so happens that the symbolic interactionist school of sociology has traditionally had a particular fascination with – guess what? – crime and deviant behaviour. Ten years ago, when I was an undergraduate, I was struck with this particular preoccupation which I regarded as rather gratuitous. Why did symbolic interactionists find drug-takers and psychiatric patients so much more interesting than church goers or farmers? Basically, because the behaviour of the former lay outside the limits of what society appeared to consider 'normal'. By studying society's deviants, symbolic interactionists argued that they could learn more about the rules governing 'normal' behaviour. Yet, ironically, in so doing, symbolic interactionists were, in effect, stating just like the media – that the unusual was more interesting than the routine.

Alvin Gouldner has pointed out that this particular school of sociology is much keener to concentrate on those who can be portrayed as helpless 'victims' of society's evil ways rather than those who have actually got up and done something about their

situation. He maintains that relatively few studies have been conducted of those involved in civil rights struggles or peace groups. He further believes that underlying such sociology is a world-view that sees the problem as the 'caretakers' who 'society has appointed to administer the mess it has created rather than the way society is organised and those at the top in charge of the 'caretakers'. (Gouldner, 1970: 228-230). This criticism could be applied equally to the media.

Paradigms and Parallels

When it comes to the question of just whose interests the media operates in, the predominant viewpoint seems to have been that of the neo-Marxist structuralists. They see journalists as working within and reproducing a consensual paradigm which masks the reality of the conflict of interest between oppressor and oppressed.

Gouldner makes almost exactly the same criticism of the 'deviance' school of sociology. He asserts their work actually suits the establishment because it keeps the lid on embarrassing questions challenging the very social institutions that might be responsible for the problems those sociologists uncover. Gouldner sees such sociologists as part of a professional, liberal mafia in which one might equally include, in my view, the media. (Gouldner, 1970: 237-244).

Although many sociologists do challenge the consensus view both within the world in general and within their own professions – social scientists do operate within the confines of paradigms. While there are many competing paradigms within the social sciences, its practitioners do sometimes seem to slip a little too easily into a cosy consensus. Take the Northern Ireland 'problem'; John Whyte points out that social scientists have reached a remarkable degree of consensus on this subject. The dominant paradigm is the internal-conflict model which gives primacy to the conflict of interest between the two communities within Northern Ireland. This paradigm is also, of course, shared by the British government, unionist politicians and much of the media. Whyte suggests that the time might have come for academics to move on and adopt a new paradigm. (Whyte, 1991: 255-259).

Conclusion

Thus there seems little doubt that social scientists do share some characteristics with journalists; that the former have certain rules of procedure which lend weight to their work, that they too rely ultimately on 'letting the facts speak for themselves', and that they can be just as selective as journalists in terms of quotes, subject matter and the stance they take.

I am not suggesting that social scientists are not sufficiently critical of their own profession or that they are too ready to criticise journalists. I have been a little surprised that there seem to be very few sociological works which note let alone analyse the parallels between the two professions. There are, of course, parallels to be drawn between all the professions but it seems to me that the similarity between elements of journalism and social science is particularly obvious. It is the apparent lack of interest in this particular fact among sociologists combined with the patronising tone sometimes adopted by media sociologists which causes me to wonder whether there is a doubtless unconscious desire to erect a firm dividing line between the two sets of practitioners.

Why might such a wish exist? I suspect the answer may lie in the insecurity which surrounds all professions. Although they have carved out niches for themselves, the professions must always be on the guard for potential rivals seeking to encroach on their territory.

In reality, there is overlap between the social sciences and journalism. Not so much in that many journalists would claim their work amounted to social science – unless like

me they are doing postgraduate degrees in the subject! However, many social science works are designed to have appeal to a wider audience than academics. Certainly, several of the better known books on Northern Ireland (Steve Bruce's *God Save Ulster!* or Padraig O'Malley's *Biting at the Grave*, for example) employ a journalistic style of presentation, making laudable use of a highly readable narrative form while not neglecting a penetrating level of analysis. I welcome such an overlap. I do not in any way believe that social science and journalism are essentially the same crafts. However, I do feel that the notion that there is always a firm dividing line is simply another example of the 'social construction of reality' which symbolic interactionists are engaged in trying to unmask.

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The Political Lobby System

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Introduction

At the heart of the political system in Ireland, inside Leinster House, is a small group of journalists who cover politics. They are the political correspondents. They have a privileged position, their own rooms, access to politicians in their place of work, access to government ministers and regular briefings from the government press secretary and from the press officers of the other political parties. It is these few journalists, working together, who write the first story on any event, who decide what to cover and how stories should be covered. It is to these journalists that the government press secretary goes following a cabinet meeting to give them what he wants them to hear, all off the record. On radio and television, in the morning and evening newspapers, his words will appear as a 'government source', a 'source close to the government'; or more obliquely, 'indications are' or 'it would seem that the government intends'. At times, the words of the Government press secretary, a civil servant, have appeared as a source speaking for a political party. What is most important is that what is said can often be denied by the Taoiseach or government ministers, if they do not like the reaction.

There are more intangible privileges of lobby membership. In Ireland the political correspondents work in a small parliament, rubbing shoulders with their main sources every day, using the same bar and the same self service restaurant. They spend most of their working time in Leinster House, away from their newsrooms and newsdesks, working with colleagues from rival news organisations.

How these journalists operate and what they do has not been a major subject for study by either academics or by journalists. Professor J. J. Lee's monumental study, *Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society* has no chapter dealing with the press or the media, indeed in the index there are only two references to the media. Only the later editions of Basil Chubb's work, *The Politics and Government of Ireland* include a chapter on the media and then a purely descriptive one. There are many anecdotal accounts of Irish journalism by journalists: Andrew Dunlop's *Fifty Years of Irish Journalism*, published in 1911, J. B. Hall's *Random Records of a Reporter*, published in the 1920s, Richard Pigott's *Recollections of an Irish Journalist* published in 1882, right up to 1992 with the publication of *More Kicks than Pence*, by Michael O'Toole. None of these include accounts of working in political journalism.

Apart from some histories of the press in Ireland historians and social scientists have used the source and have not analyzed it as a player in the political game. This failure to analyze the media in terms of its relationship to the political process and government has not been the case in Britain where there has been a large body of work devoted to the Westminister lobby system, to the role of political correspondents and their relationship to government. Analysis of British political journalism dates possibly from the publication of Jeremy Tunstall's *The Lobby Correspondent* in the early 1960s and ends with Robert Harris's *Good and Faithful Servant – The Unauthorised Biography of Bernard Ingham* in 1990.

Similarities between Ireland and Britain

The Irish political system has inherited much from the British system - including a similar relationship between Government and the media - one so similar to that found in Britain that the critiques of the British system can, I would argue, be applied to Ireland. In Britain there is a news gathering system at Westminister which many academics and media observers believe is open to manipulation by the increasingly sophisticated Government press relations machine. There are also a number of journalistic practices and routines which lend themselves to manipulation, such as off-the-record briefings and the so-called "lobby terms", a fact which was highlighted during the controversial tenure, as Government press secretary, of Bernard Ingham. Mr Ingham's use of the system for the benefit of the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, was so blatant, political and in some ways so public, that sections of the media in Britain assumed that his departure meant the end of manipulation, rather than view the system as one which allowed Mr Ingham to operate as he did for the years he was Press Secretary.

The independent Irish State inherited much from the British including cabinet government, a parliamentary system, the common law system and a body of legislation. It also inherited a similar press with common journalistic practices. Those practices were also taken on by the electronic media, first with Radio Eireann, then, in the 1960s, by Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE), when Irish television was established. These similarities in the organisation of Government – especially the cabinet system and in the way the media works – has led to a further similarity in the way the press and the political system relate to each other. In Britain this system is formally called the Westminister lobby system. No such formal name is used to describe the Irish system, though the term 'the lobby' is often used by journalists and politicians as a form of shorthand to describe the group of political correspondents.

At first sight it would appear that there are few if any similarities between the media and politics in Britain and Ireland. The political correspondents in Ireland do not operate with the same 'curious mix of mystery and ritual' (Negrine, 1989:157) as their Westminister counterparts do; they have no secret written rules on how to behave; they do not use code words to keep their meetings with leading Government figures secret from their colleagues. Irish political correspondents do not surround themselves with an aura. In Westminister the lobby system does not officially exist, nor does the room where they receive their briefings. In recent years television cameras were allowed in once and the rules, for a body over 100 years old, were only published a short while ago.

But despite appearances to the contrary, the essence of both systems is the same. Leinster House might not appear to have much in common with Westminister but both are clubby and exclusive even if one club has, as it were, a more casual dress code. In both parliaments a form of membership has grown up with reporters, who have access, being given collective, off the record, briefings. In both parliaments named journalists are appointed, not as specialists, as in the case of industrial, economic or education matters but as generalists who cover a place. The political correspondents' room in Leinster House does not have the same mystique as the lobby correspondents' room in Westminster but it operates on the same exclusive basis, excluding all journalists who are not political correspondents – even specialists who write on the subject of a particular briefing – from briefings.

It is hardly surprising that there are similarities in political reporting between Britain and Ireland. Until 1922 Irish politics, in the constitutional sense at least, took place at Westminister and Irish newspapers had their own parliamentary reporters and lobby correspondents covering the Imperial Parliament. Furthermore, there has always been, and continues to be, movement among journalists between British and Irish newspapers

and other media, facilitated by the fact that Irish and British journalists are mainly members of the one trade union and, of course, speak and write in the same language. Even today the Irish press has greater access and privileges in the British House of Parliament than journalists from any other country, and it still maintains, even if it rarely uses, lobby rights which no other foreign press is allowed.

Many journalists working in Ireland previously worked for British media, or for the London offices of Irish newspapers or RTE, and brought back with them some of the traditions and practices of Fleet Street. In the early 1960s the management of RTE recruited in Britain for senior news staff to come to Ireland to work for the new television station which meant that the earliest journalistic practices either came from newspapers or from Britain. And of course, the British media is widely available in Ireland, accounting for thirteen per cent of daily newspaper sales.

Finally, there is the historical link. As with so much else in British constitutional and political life, the lobby developed due to the turbulent nature of the relationship between the two countries.

The Westminister Lobby

The Westminister lobby was created as a method of limiting access to Westminister following a Fenian bombing which damaged part of the Palace of Westminister and the House of Commoms. The lobby list, which names those with access to the lobby, and more importantly, the lobby briefings, is still kept by the Speaker of the House, as decided in 1884.

Mr James Margach was the longest serving political correspondent in Westminister when he retired as political correspondent and lobby correspondent of the *Sunday Times* in 1979 having covered governments under twelve prime ministers. In his *Anatomy of Power* (1981) he describes how the lobby was established and emphasizes that this was not

> inspired by any ideals for more open government. Its purpose was to create a new group of insiders and exclude the public and the mass of writers of countless newsletters, pamphlet-sheets and weeklies who had overcrowded the Members' lobby.
>
> (Margach, 1978:125)

Margach wrote two books based on his experience of the lobby, *The Abuse of Power* (1978) and *The Anatomy of Power* (1981). What makes his work important is that not only is there no other history of the lobby but many of the lobby files were destroyed when the House of Commons was bombed in 1941. His memoirs rank, therefore, as one of the few accounts we have of the early years.

In *The Abuse of Power* he writes of the 'tempestuous and never ending war between Downing Street and Fleet Street, Whitehall and the press'. The first priority for all prime ministers has been to win this war.

> They desired to enrol and exploit the media as an arm of Government. Two objectives possessed them. First, to establish and fortify their personal power; and second to reinforce the conspiracy of secrecy, to preserve the sanctity of Government behind the walls of Whitehall's forbidden city.
>
> (Margach, 1978:1)

The main function of the organized lobby is to preserve what are known as 'lobby terms'.

Margach explains that lobby terms

> allow lobby correspondents to report as their own view and discoveries the opinions and possible policies of prime ministers and others confided to them in a House of Commons committee room, never to be acknowledged by the minister concerned. They know better than anybody they are playing a game of compulsory kite flying by reporting views of high authority anonymously and unattributably after communion with the political saints.
>
> (Margach, 1981:126)

According to Margach, a major change took place in the lobby when Ramsey MacDonald appointed Britain's first government press secretary (then called Private Secretary Intelligence). Officially he was to liaise with the political correspondents and the lobby, the reality was a personal role 'to plug the numerous leaks taking place from MacDonald's National Government' (Margach, 1981:127). Margach is clear in recognizing George Steward's appointment as the beginnings of the modern lobby: 'That was how the incestuous relationship between government and the Lobby on an organised and corporate basis started.' (Margach, 1981:127). After Steward was appointed to liaise with the lobby all lobby members started to receive the same briefing from ministers or approved sources. What might have looked like a move towards open government meant a change in the status of the journalist: 'The old style competitive outsiders were converted into a fraternity of organised insiders' (Margach, 1981:137).

For Margach the close relationship between the lobby correspondents and the Government is almost inevitable:

> This relationship between Government and the media concentrated in the lobby is unique in the western world, circumscribed and made inevitable as it is by the Officials Secrets Act, the Privy Councillor's oath and parliamentary privilege. Each needs and feeds upon the other, one offers publicity and fame, the other the highly marketable commodity of news and power. Both Government and the media are compelled by the unlimited demands of modern communications to co-operate, yet by all basic tests they are opposing and rival forces.
>
> (Margach, 1981:129)

But why do Margach and others believe that the British parliamentary system almost demands the lobby be established? Clive Ponting (1990) maintains that Britain has one of the most extensive systems for controlling the flow of information of any western democracy. When Britain exported its parliamentary model to its former colonies, including Ireland, it exported more than simply the notion of an elected chamber, electing a government from amongst itself. It also exported a number of other concepts such as collective cabinet responsibility, the anonymous civil servant, the secrecy sworn by ministers when they become Privy Councillors, parliamentary privilege and, of course, the cabinet system, a system that almost demands that the prime minister maintain a tight control on media, surrounded as he or she is by his or her rivals and potential successors around the cabinet table. itself. As Jeremy Tunstall argues:

> The national nature of both politics and the media in Britain, and the peculiarities of an unwritten constitution, in which the respective roles of parliament and cabinet are somewhat unclear, has led to a peculiar set of arrangements for political journalists.
>
> (Tunstall, 1983:130)

Parliamentary privilege does, of course, give journalists some protection in reporting parliament. If an MP libels a person in the chamber, for example, the journalist is not liable if s/he repeats the libel in the next edition of a newspaper in a report of parliament's proceedings. However, it also allows the government to control when information is made available, ensuring that it is not made public until the government decides. This makes it possible to give journalists information, knowing they cannot publish until the report or paper is formally announced in the House. Collective cabinet responsibility, once a method of protecting individual members of the government from dismissal by the king, now ensures that important differences of opinion over policy rarely get into the public domain. It allows the prime minister, through the press secretary, to control what comes out of cabinet and thus be the main source of information from cabinet. But the ultimate privilege is the privilege of allowing the lobby correspondents to operate at all. As Colin Seymour-Ure says:

> The lobby journalist operates in conditions which are ultimately under the control of the Commons. They are in practice self-governing; but rather in the sense of a self governing colony, with a strictly limited area of discretion.
>
> (Seymour-Ure, 1968)

The linking of the formation of the Cabinet with Britain's obsessive secrecy has been noted by a number of writers. Cockerell, Hennessey and Walker in *Sources Close to the Prime Minister* (1984) point to the paradox that, as Britain was moving towards becoming a fully fledged democracy by extending the vote to all, mechanisms were being created to frustrate popular participation, to control, channel and even manufacture news. The authors see no accident in the fact that the lobby was created in 1884 and the first Official Secrets Act was passed only five years later (p34). They talk of a compliant press working in a system of 'profound administrative secrecy' (p7). 'Political correspondents are players in a sophisticated game of private briefings, official steers and all manner of guidance from civil servants whose instincts are not towards public disclosure' (p10). Cabinet meetings are secret, except when the Prime Minister's press aides tell the press about them: 'What they tell the press is often tainted' (p20).

> The lobby's 150 or so members are briefed, and what the prime minister's press secretary says is what the prime minister wants the press, radio and television to report, without identifying the source. The press secretary has thus been the anonymous provider of more stories than all the Whitehall officials and cabinet ministers put together. He is the ultimate source close to the prime minister, he is frequently referred to in this oblique way, but almost never cited by name as the source
>
> (Cockerell et al., 1984:31)

Bernard Ingham

More recent criticism of the lobby has tended to focus on the style of a particular government press secretary, Mr Bernard Ingham, and the former Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher. Critics saw in Ingham a man who used the lobby to create something called 'Thatcherism'. The lobby itself worried about being managed, of being used as a weapon in internal cabinet battles. It was during Ingham's term of office, the longest of any press secretary, that the first cracks appeared, with one national newspaper refusing to enter the lobby and another leaving.

Ingham has two notable firsts to his name. He was the first Government press secretary, the ubiquitous source, to be mentioned by name in the House of Commons and he was the first serving civil servant to be the subject of a biography while still in office. *Good and Faithful Servant – the unauthorised biography of Bernard Inqham* by Robert Harris covers the years he served Mrs Thatcher from November, 1979 to November, 1990. Sir Bernard, as he became on retirement, had been a journalist, first on his local newspaper and eventually on the *Guardian* as part of that newspaper's labour staff. He had also been a labour party activist and contributed an unsigned weekly column to the Leeds *Weekly Citizen*, and labour Party newspaper. He left journalism in the late 1960s, entered the Government Information Service. He was Mrs Thatcher's second press secretary after the short reign of Mr Henry James, whose appointment was made on the recommendation of the lobby itself (Harris, 1990:71).

Harris maintains that given a ruthless prime minister and an ambitious government press officer, the lobby became a superb instrument for imposing Number 10's view, pre-empting debate and undermining dissenting ministers. Harris claimed that Ingham may have created the Thatcher image of the tough woman prime minister. He would say it, the press would report it and she would live up to it (Harris, 1990:86-87). The lobby soon realized that he had an inside track, and the fact that his background was Labour and he had worked for the *Guardian* gave him a credibility with the lobby.

All commentators have their own incidents which for them highlights Ingham's role during the Thatcher years. Harris cites a number of such incidents, but nearly all have the common thread of marginalizing the Prime Minister's rivals within the Cabinet. One incident concerned Mr Francis Pym, considered a 'wet' in cabinet terms. He gave a speech which was not considered as up-beat as those the prime minister was giving at the time. While Mrs Thatcher was defending her Foreign Secretary in the Commons, Mr Ingham was giving a deniable briefing to the lobby on Mr Pym at the same time. His 'rubbishing' of Mr Pym, as the process became known, took precedence over the Prime Ministers defence of Mr Pym in the following day's newspapers. That incident Harris described as 'premeditated abuse of the main channel of communications between the government and the media' (Harris, 1990:92).

Negrine points to the Falkland's war as bringing to light 'practices of news management, that is, the deliberate feeding of (sometimes inaccurate) information to journalists in the hope of confusing or duping the enemy (or the reader)' (Negrine, 1989:156-157). Harris maintains that during the Falklands War and the general election that followed, Ingham played a decidedly political role. He also claims that Ingham was protected by the 'discrete conventions of the lobby' (Harris 1990:96-98). Mrs Thatcher let her views of her cabinet colleagues be known, not through a political aide, but by an official announcement, off the record, by a civil servant spokesman for the entire Government in twice daily contact with the lobby. There was, of course, little any one could do about it because technically these briefings did not take place.

During the controversy surrounding the Thames Television programme, *Death on the Rock*, the investigation into the death of members of the Provisional IRA in Gibralter, Ingham went on the record denouncing the media. The Labour Party denounced him as a creature of the Conservative Party, while he defended himself, saying the Government was free to express views on the media (Harris, 1990:160).

The Prime Minister was able to use the lobby system as part of her own policy of centralizing the government, to chop ministers off at the knees, while publicly supporting them. Her own 'passions and prejudices' were aired in the media as if they were government policy. Harris also sees the rise of Bernard Ingham and the creation of Thatcherism as being made possible by the lobby system. 'Nods and winks, kite flying

and speculation are the stock in trade of a system which is not attributable' (Harris, 1990:163).

As mentioned previously, during 1986 the lobby received its most severe blow in its more than 100 year history, one newspaper refused to join and another announced it was leaving. The London *Independent* launched that year announced that if it was to live up to its name it could not be a member of the lobby. The editor of the *Guardian*, Mr Peter Preston, took a slightly different line. His journalists would attend lobby briefings, but would refer to a Downing Street spokesman or Mrs Thatcher's spokesman and quote from him.

The *Guardian's* new policy was announced in that newspaper on 25 September, 1986, when the editor published a letter from him to Ingham and the reply. Preston said he had long been unhappy about some of the workings of the parliamentary lobby.

> I've always wanted, as a first and most basic step, to see a situation where the Downing Street spokesman of the day – a civil servant – gives his regular rendition of the government's policy views on the record at meetings that happen, rather than off-the-record at meetings which 'don't happen'. But, until very recently, there has been no momentum for change.

Preston said that he had instructed his political staff to attend as normal the daily briefings, 'but instead of employing any of the customary and increasingly threadbare circumlocutions they shall refer openly to a Downing Street spokesman, or Mrs Thatcher's spokesman and, as relevant, quote what that spokesman says.'

There followed a debate in the *Guardian* about the lobby. Former political correspondents were critical. Former government press secretaries warned of the consequence of not having off the record briefings.

On 28 October, 1986, Mr Hugo Young wrote an article, headed, 'Honest lobby will be the best policy, the arguments for and against the parliamentary lobby of journalists.' To change the lobby and attribute information and guidance would still mean that the non attributed private briefing would take place. What you would have is two classes of information,

> part of it sourced and *en clair*, part of it coded into background guidance... The same duality affects all reporting. The fact that one seeks attributable information does not make it dishonest to seek unattributable information as well. It may be less convenient for the sources. For the reporter, anywhere outside Whitehall and in every free country outside Britain, it is normal practice.

On 29 October the lobby voted 67 to 55 against a change in the rules of non-attribution and by 68 to 58 in favour of an inquiry into lobby practices. The ballot was held following an earlier meeting called to discuss the *Guardian's* decision to break the non-attribution rule at lobby briefings.

The two newspapers remained out of the lobby until Mrs Thatcher fell from power and was replaced by Mr John Major who appointed a new government press secretary, a former Treasury official, Mr Gus McDonald. There was no debate as to whether the lobby was now reformed, but both newspapers became full members of the lobby accepting the rules and lobby terms. Unlike the debate that took place over the earlier decision, the return to the lobby was low key. The *Independent* announced its decision on 17 October, 1991 on page three, the last item in a column of news in briefs under a single column headline, 'Lobby Decision'. It stated that the political staff would begin

attending briefings. The editor, Mr Andreas Whittam Smith was quoted as saying that under Mrs Thatcher the lobby system was entirely unattributable and had been used to rubbish ministers and political opponents anonymously.

> Under Mr Major, however, the system has altered so that attribution to Number 10 or the prime minister's office is generally the rule. Nor has the machinery of Downing Street briefings been used, as we see it, in a repugnant way.

But Mr McDonald's appointment did not entirely end the debate over the lobby, even if Mr Whittan Smith believed this to be the case. The following month the BBC's *Late Show* carried a long item on the controversy (5 November 1991). David Walker, a journalist and long time critic of the system and one of the authors of *Sources Close to the Prime Minister*, spoke of the system as a parliamentary conspiracy and a 'private rendezvous with public power', where the prime minister gave out a line of events, or a version. He said that after the *Guardian* and the *Independent's* decision to leave the lobby, political reporting was looking more honest.

Honest because political reporters could name Bernard Ingham and report how a civil servant, bound by a code of political neutrality had become Mrs Thatcher's alter ego. They used plural sources, they could make their own minds up free of the pressure of the lobby line. McDonald had said that from now on the media would be allowed to attribute what was said to a Downing Street spokesman

> or even, daringly, to the prime ministers office. With this decision the newspapers decided quietly to rejoin. The implication was no more Bernard Ingham, no more manipulation. But Ingham's departure did not alter the basis of the lobby system. It is still pernicious ... What is wrong is the way the lobby obeys the instincts of the herd.

Walker concurred,

> The parliamentary lobby briefing system is a prime example of how a self defence mechanism works. Everybody belongs, no one breaks ranks, the same low grade stories are produced and everyone is happy. It is a crutch for crippled journalism.
>
> With so many journalists receiving collective briefings every day, strategically set just before deadlines, there is no time for plural sources or different angles.

For Whittan Smith, speaking on the same programme, the fact that the newspapers had left was a major victory and they could do so again. For Walker, however, the lobby was an institution with its rules and its own personality. How can we take it on trust that is has changed. To do so is to give the Prime Minister a huge gift of credibility.

Conclusion

108 years after the lobby was established in Britain it still exists despite criticism and attacks. David Walker would probably argue that it is as strong as it ever was, having survived an inquiry and the trauma of a newspaper like the *Guardian* withdrawing and the *Independent* refusing to join.

The similarities between the Westminister lobby system outlined in this essay and the Irish system are enough to warrant a comparison to see if the operation of the lobby in Britain could justifiably be compared with what goes on in Ireland and if the critiques

of the Westminister lobby system can be applied to Ireland. The earlier part of this essay has argued that there are strong similarities in both systems. However, similarities in structures and organization could possibly hide a system which allows greater independent inquiry, while maintaining elements of the British lobby terms. It might be the case that the developments of the British system into one where collective briefings and 'pack journalism' is the norm did not develop to the same extent in Ireland, possibly because of the smaller size of the Irish parliament.

However, the similarities noted above go further. Some political correspondents themselves speak privately of government manipulation of the exclusivity of a club. Only those who are full-time political writers can attend briefings. The author, while education correspondent of *The Irish Times* had to sit outside a room and listen through an open door to a briefing given by the then Minister for Education, Ms Mary O'Rourke. The Minister was not aware of this arrangement. Reporters working on political stories have been refused access because they have not been appointed full-time political correspondents.

If critics of the British system are correct when they identify British secrecy as leading to arrangements such as the lobby, then there is further cause for concern. Brian Farrell, in a paper entitled 'Cabinet media relationships: Approaches to a comparative typology' (1989) looked at moves towards allowing wider access to official documentation as part of a comparative study of media cabinet relationships in Europe. Ireland and Britain

> remain at the closed end of the spectrum with very broadly construed Official Secrets Acts, stringently applied to prevent - except in the case of the politically contrived leaks - all unauthorized publication of official documentation.

Farrell clearly sees Britain and Ireland operating a similar system.

> ...a lobby system in which regular briefings are only given to a select group of accredited journalists usually on a non attributable basis. This creates a much more secretive form of Cabinet-media relationship, frequently characterised by leaks, often inspired and manipulated.

Having noted numerous similarities in practice and style, as well as development, between the British and Irish system, it does not necessarily follow that the criticisms made of one automatically transfer to the other. Negrine (1989) believes that one of the problems in the Westminister lobby is the sheer size, with membership of between 100 and 150 journalists. He says that such numbers impose their own constraints on the ability of individuals to gather information. In Leinster House, with the number using the political correspondents room numbering about twelve that constraint might not exist.

If Irish political writers have found a way of combining collective background briefings with individual investigation, so much the better. However, the relationship between government and media is an important one and it is necessary that more research takes place so that we can know the degree of manipulation that takes place and the ability of the journalists and the system of information gathering to resist it.

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Government, Propaganda and the Irish News Agency

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Origins of the Irish News Agency

The theme of identity forged in adversity has bulked large on the agenda of the founders of many small nation states, and the case of Ireland is no exception. The extent and nature of the Irish diaspora, in addition, has given this theme an added dimension: its propagation to the world at large. Bending the world's ear to the cause of righting Ireland's wrongs has been a constant, if rarely successful, strand in Irish nationalist policy for over two centuries. It is only in more recent times, however, that it has become more formally associated with the official structures of the State, most notably in the seven-year experimental existence of the Irish News Agency (I.N.A.). The history of this institution, unique in the Irish administrative system, provides us with important perspectives on government ideology in relation to Northern Ireland and in relation to the news media themselves, as well as on the nature of professional journalism in Ireland in the 1950s.

In 1945 Séan MacBride, recently elected to the Dail and founder of the Clann na Poblachta party, wrote to Eamonn de Valera ('Dear Chief'), with whom he had evidently been in contact earlier on the same issue, urging the establishment of an Irish news agency to put Ireland's arguments about partition to the world, and to obviate the situation whereby all news about Ireland carried on the international news agencies was sub-edited – often prejudicially – in London[1]. De Valera passed the proposal on to the Director of the Government Information Bureau, Frank Gallagher (an able newspaperman who had been the first editor of the *Irish Press*, and who had subsequently found refuge in Mr de Valera's service after tangling with the newspaper's board of management). MacBride was nothing if not enthusiastic: in a period of some five weeks at the end of the year, he wrote to de Valera and Gallagher three times, setting out his conviction that such a Government-subsidized agency was essential

a) 'to counter hostile propaganda',

b) because other countries had officially supported news agencies,

c) because it was unlikely that an Irish News Agency would be a paying proposition in its early years, and

d) that private setting up of the agency would mean that it would be 'under the control of financial interests'[2].

Gallagher (and, one presumes, de Valera), expressed reservations. Gallagher's first objection was that the action of the Dáil in voting public money to support such an undertaking would be so misrepresented 'as to kill all hope of the agency ever succeeding'. In other countries, he observed wistfully, governments were freer to 'do a good national act without it being made into a crime'. Sensing a log-jam, MacBride backtracked, suggesting in his last letter that all-party agreement for the agency might be secured, and that the best option might be that the editors or managements of the three Dublin dailies might be asked to consider and report on the possibility of setting up the agency themselves. The latter proposal was the first to get under Gallagher's guard. 'The whole situation would have a different aspect', he averred, 'if the initiative came from the pressmen'[3]. Nonetheless, this too was shelved.

It was some three and a half years later that MacBride, as the newly-appointed

1. MacBride to de Valera, 14 May 1945. National Archives, S 14544A.

2. MacBride to de Valera, 6 November 1945, MacBride to Gallagher, 15 November 1945, 6 December 1945. National Archives, S 14544 A.

3. Gallagher to MacBride, 15 November 1945, 30 November 1945, 8 December 1945. National Archives, S 14544 A.

Minister for External Affairs, was at last in a position to put his theory into practice. His qualifications were not only political but professional. For many years he was a correspondent for the French Havas news agency (later to be incorporated into Agencies France Presse), was a member of the National Union of Journalists, and took pride in telling the Dáil that he was 'probably the only member to go out on strike and picket a newspaper office'[4]. His searches in the governmental archives were fruitless – de Valera had apparently removed one of the relevant files on leaving office, regarding it as personal[5] – but his enthusiasm was undimmed by the passage of time. In January 1949 a memorandum from the Department of External Affairs to the Government noted that 'while we have 32,171 civil servants, there is not one of them who is charged with any function in relation to partition'[6]. The contrast with the situation prevailing in Northern Ireland was underlined.

4. Dáil Debates (otherwise DD), 16 November 1949, Vol. 118, Col. 977. He gave no further details of the incident, which may have been in relation to a dispute involving the Irish Press.

5. Ó Múimhneacháin to Boland, 23 May 1949. National Archives, S 14544 A.

6. National Archives, S 14544 (as are subsequent quotations, unless otherwise identified).

On 18 May, the proposal was fleshed out in a more detailed memorandum, proposing the establishment of an Irish News Agency whose publications

> should include reports of important pronouncements on partition. It should, be strictly non-party and non-political in the sense that it should only deal with matters of foreign policy and matters that are non-controversial at home.

It would be run with a small government subsidy by a company specially established for the purpose.

> The [Agency's] Diplomatic Correspondent would in effect be the Government spokesman and propagandist. His task would be to publicize in the form of news the Government's policy on partition.

There would be offices in London and New York, and the annual cost to public funds would be of the order of £20,000. Three days later, the Government minutes discreetly recorded the approval of a 'number of proposals ... in connection with partition', of which the creation of the Irish News Agency was undoubtedly one.

The next task was the passage of the necessary legislation, and the promotion of the concept to Irish public and journalistic opinion. The latter task was far from easy: influential sections of journalistic opinion were implacably opposed to the creation of the agency and were ultimately, as will be seen, partially responsible for its demise.

7. No. 33 of 1949.

Even before the Irish News Agency Bill[7] reached the floor of the Dáil, journalistic sabres were being rattled in their scabbards. A low-key report in the *Irish Independent* (17 June 1949) indicated that the service to be provided would be 'not elaborate' and would be confined to airmail and short-wave radio. Two days later, its sister paper, the *Sunday Independent*, went on the offensive. Money spent on the new agency would be 'largely wasted'. The Government's proposal, the paper added, 'smacks too much of a plan to set up a propaganda department. Neither Ireland nor the rest of the world wants it' (19 June 1949). MacBride moved swiftly into a damage limitation exercise. The new agency, he told the *Irish Independent* in a special interview, 'will not replace existing media for the supply of Irish news, but will supplement them' (27 June 1949). The editor of the *Irish Independent* was unconvinced. The scheme, he commented, had 'not been sufficiently thought out', and a committee to examine the proposal would, perhaps, be a better idea (7 July 1949). Over in Westmoreland Street, *The Irish Times* (where the editor, R.M. Smyllie, writing as 'Nichevo' indicated that he had briefly considered the idea of starting an Irish news agency before abandoning the idea on grounds of cost) was more patrician, but no less suspicious[8]. 'We do not believe', it stated editorially, 'that the existing news agencies are prejudiced against [Ireland] ... Mr MacBride's diminutive agency certainly will not galvanise the apathetic audiences of the great world into a state of appreciation' (15 July 1949).

8. Séan MacBride, DD, 13 July 1949, Vol 117, Col. 760.

The opposition to MacBride was formidable, both inside and outside the Dáil. Inside, Séan Lemass was at his most rumbustious. Additionally he had, as Managing Director

of the *Irish Press* newspaper (a position he was offered when Fianna Fáil were put out of office the previous year, and one which he had embraced with his customary vigour and enthusiasm), more than a passing interest in this particular scheme. Fianna Fáil, out of office for the first time since 1932, had a truffle-hound's nose for proposals that were conceptually or financially shaky, and Lemass, especially where matters of company legislation were concerned, had a keener nose than most. Outside, the National Union of Journalists (or at least some of its adherents) was getting its lobbying apparatus into gear. The NUJ, although weak, was in the process of establishing itself as the major trade union for journalists in Ireland. It had more than four times the membership of its main rival, the Institute of Journalists.

The main plank of MacBride's argument was, indeed, the one calculated to appeal most to Fianna Fáil: the thesis that Ireland should throw off the shackles of domination by the foreign news agencies as it had thrown off those of foreign political domination. 'Because of transmission difficulties, because of our unimportance, if you like, in the stream of world affairs', he told the Dáil, 'all the news that emanates in Ireland is canalised through London'. The need for an independent source of news about Ireland was threefold:

> first of all, unlike most other countries we have a national objective to achieve. We still have to gain full control of our own country ... We have to counteract a good deal of foreign propaganda ... We need news channels of our own in order to encourage the development of our industrial life, of our foreign trade, of our tourist traffic, to make known our cultural developments and also to make known our viewpoints in the field of international affairs as the need arises.[9]

Blithely quoting de Valera himself (who had told the Dáil the previous year that the dwindling flow of emigrants to those countries 'most sympathetic to us' necessitated the provision of fresh channels of communication), he made no bones about the fact that the new service would not be a paying proposition, and underlined its principal function as a conduit for the Government's anti-partition policy abroad. Some of his arguments were acceptable only if his listeners were prepared to accept that the same word could embody two different and opposed meanings within the compass of a single paragraph ... It is not,

> to be a propaganda machine or a machine which will present news other than in an objective, truthful and accurate way. It may be said that it will serve as a propaganda medium in so far as one of its main functions will be to place Ireland on the map and that to that extent it will be serving a proganda service by making Ireland known throughout the world in different spheres.[10]

It was not intended that the news agency should be the official mouthpiece of the Government: that function was being very efficiently performed by the Government Information Bureau[11] – but, when necessary, 'it will give Ireland's viewpoint on political affairs'. It was not going to be a 'political propaganda machine', but one of its essential functions would be to negative 'unfriendly, hostile or sensational propaganda about Ireland[12].

This stylish exercise in having your cake and eating it was accompanied by the offering of one substantial – and ultimately fatal – hostage to fortune: an undertaking that the new INA would not deal in 'hot news', i.e. the kind of news that daily and weekly Irish media were generally in the habit of collecting for themselves. This commitment was evidently designed to mollify the NUJ, whose members' low earnings were frequently supplemented by work as correspondents for larger or foreign media enterprises. In the event, it failed to do even that and, in addition, presented the Opposition with a weapon which it used to considerable effect.

9. DD, 13 July 1949, Vol 117, Col. 760.

10. Ibid, Col. 761.

11. Official files document a certain amount of mutual antipathy between the Information Section in the Department of External Affairs and the Government Information Bureau. Cf. National Archives, S 4858, especially memoranda from Patrick Lunch, Secretary to the Government, complaining that Conor Cruise O'Brien in the Department of External Affairs Information section tended to 'foist on the Information Bureau ... work of an arduous nature which is sometimes not obviously related to the proper functions of the Department'.

12. DD, 13 July 1949, Vol. 117, Col. 762.

De Valera defended his own record by arguing that what he had most in mind was the proposed short-wave service (viewed with some disfavour by the Inter-Party Government), but it was left to Séan Lemass to mount the most ferocious attack on MacBride for 'setting up a company which will not be a company and ... a news agency which will not be a news agency'[13]. The NUJ troops came in behind Lemass in the shape of Séan McCann, a senior journalist on the *Irish Press* and a Fianna Fáil deputy, who told the Dáil that he was 'speaking on behalf of working journalists who feel that their livelihood is being attacked in this Bill'. If the agency became, in time, a paying proposition, 'that can only mean that the agency will be in competition with other journalists who send 'copy' out of this country'[14].

13. Ibid., Col 819.

14. Ibid., Col. 832.

In point of fact, the agency was, in the Bill, given the powers normally pertaining to a news agency, i.e. power to distribute news inside Ireland. When this was pointed out by an Opposition deputy who wanted to limit the dissemination of news to places outside the country, Mr MacBride gave his reasons. If such a statutory ban were in place, the agency would, for example, be unable to provide news to the proposed short wave service. Nor would it be able to disseminate news to the Irish-based correspondents of foreign newspapers and agencies.

If he had thought that the latter explanation would blunt the edge of the attack by the resident correspondents of American and other agencies, the Minister was being too optimistic by half. His principal opponent, Séan Lemass, immediately focused on the central flaw in the Government's strategy: if the agency did not disseminate 'hot news', it would not be an agency; if it did, it would imperil the livelihood of Irish journalists, because foreign newspapers and magazines will be supplied with 'free news' by civil servants, while trade union journalists who depend for a living on the dissemination of news to foreign journals will be forced into unemployment[15].

15. DD, 16 November 1949, Vol. 118, Col. 952.

MacBride had in fact already met an NUJ deputation, whose anxieties, quite naturally, were that in so far as it was possible, the staffing of the news agency should be from members of the NUJ or some other recognised trade union[16]. These anxieties he was prepared to meet in full: the other matters raised by the union in the circular which had been sent to Lemass were not raised 'as such' by the delegation. Taking MacBride's words at face value, what appears to have happened is that there were two schools of thought within the NUJ: the central, organizational one related to the need to ensure that journalistic work continued to be performed by journalists, whether they were employed by the State or by anyone else; the second, reflecting the special interest of a sub-set of NUJ members, saw the agency as a direct threat – not to their livelihoods, for most if not all of them were in senior editorial positions in major Dublin media – but to the additional payment they received for acting as 'stringers' for foreign news agencies. MacBride correctly identified the union's major concern, but dangerously underestimated the power and influence of the foreign correspondents' group, as later events made clear.

16. Ibid., Col. 958.

The agency thus created was an oddly-shaped enterprise. According to the brief given to it by its progenitor in the Dail, it was to be occupied primarily with publicising the Government's attitude on partition abroad; it would work in harmony with the existing media; it would be a small organisation costing around £20,000 per year in public subsidies, and issuing possibly 1,000 words a day; it would not deal in 'hot news'; and it would be assisted by an Advisory Board, which might also facilitate the eventual takeover of the agency by the national newspapers.

The first year

As things turned out, virtually every one of these parameters had been shattered within the agency's first year in operation. November 1950 saw a major reversal of policy: 'the task of publicizing partition abroad', Mr MacBride told Mr Lemass in the Dáil, 'is the responsibility of other agencies ... The INA is not an organ of propaganda'[17].

17. National Archives, S. 14544 A

While it was certainly true that the anti-Partition aspect of the proposed agency's activities had not figured as fully in the Dáil debates as it had in the Cabinet discussions, this abrupt change of policy created a certain vacuum at the heart of the agency's activities, which was filled rapidly by a decision, taken by the new Board, to go into the business of providing 'hot news' both inside Ireland and overseas. This decision was taken for two reasons: because of a feeling by the Board that the agency's work on behalf of Ireland abroad would not be taken seriously by other media unless it was also acting as a normal news agency, and in order to broaden its revenue base. It was, of course, completely in conflict with the Minister's statements to the Dáil, and Mr MacBride, 'while evidently regretting that he had been so explicit in the matter, agreed that the Board would have to act as it considered best'[18]. It also immediately undermined any possibility of a friendly relationship with the rest of the domestic media. The agency grew rapidly in size, and in the scope of its activities: within a year of its establishment it was producing about 9,000 words a day. The Advisory Board was never set up.

The fact that the INA was certainly not a news agency in the generally accepted sense of the term did not deter those most directly associated with it, or those who saw it as a useful new career outlet in a country in which there had been little media change for at least a quarter of a century. There were some 200 applications for staff positions, and – to at least some surprise – the position of General Manager was given, on 18 May 1950, to Joseph Gallagher, a journalist who had been born in London (his father came from Enniskillen), but who had no Irish journalistic experience. Another key appointment was that of Brendan Malin, an *Irish Press* journalist with considerable experience of the Dail and political reporting, later to become an editor in Boston. The first Board comprised

Board meeting, INA. from left: Robert Brennan (Director), Noel Hartnett (Director), Roger Greene (Chairman), Peadar O'Curry (Director), Conor Cruise O'Brien (Managing Director), Photo: Courtesty of Hugh Hartnett.

the Dublin solicitor Roger Greene (Chairman), Conor Cruise O'Brien, (Managing Director: this was only one of Dr. O'Brien's responsibilities: he retained others in his role as a Counsellor in the Department of External Affairs), and Board members Peadar O'Curry (later editor of the *Irish Catholic*), Robert Brennan and Noel Hartnett[19].

18. Draft of Memorandum for Government, Department of External Affairs, 1953, National Archives, DFA 422/1//16/3

19. Robert Brennan was a friend of de Valera's and Irish Ambassador to Washington who had also been active in Sinn Féin publicity during the War of Independence. He served later as Director of Radio Éireann. He eventually later resigned on grounds from the INA Board on grounds of ill-health. Noel Hartnett resigned on becoming a member of Seanad Eireann. They were replaced by Messrs. John Grehan and Andrew McDonnell. Roger Greene died in 1955, when he was replaced by F.W. Padbury, of the eponymous advertising agency, who in addition functioned as Managing Director, Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien having retired in June 1955 after giving 'valuable services in setting up and carrying on the agency' (Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Irish News Agency, 16 March 1955. National Archives, S 14544 D). Other directorial appointments made at this time included Mr Seamus O'Farrell, a journalist and former senator, Senator J.G. Lennon, a Northern Nationalist member of the Stormont Senate, and Mr. P. Smyth..

The agency began its work unofficially by carrying out an interview with the Taoiseach, John A Costello, which was circulated internationally in time for St. Patrick's Day, 1950. Its first official reporting assignment for the new agency was coverage of the St. Columbanus celebrations in Luxeuil in France in the summer of 1950. What the latter had to do with publicizing Ireland's anti-partition policy abroad demanded a certain effort of the imagination, but the air was already thick with flying straws. A checklist on 9 November revealed that the bulk of items published as a result of the agency's labours had been in newspapers or magazines in Ireland itself, 312 in all, compared with 60 in the United States and 28 in other countries. In other words, much of the output of an agency designed for the export trade was in fact coming home to roost. This was particularly true of the British media, who – if they used INA copy at all – tended to use it only in the Irish editions of their publications, thus totally frustrating the intentions of the agency's founder[20].

The Irish Times, alone among Irish media, was relieved. Editorially welcoming the 'change of heart' it detected in the Minister's remarks in the Dáil, it suggested that criticism ... that seeks to sap confidence in it at this early stage is unworthy as well as unwise'. The agency's was a 'likely youngster', and the criticisms of it in the provincial press emanated from 'a common source'[21] . Indeed, in the first two years of its existence, the agency operated with vigour and professionalism: even at this remove in time, it is possible to sense something of the excitement that is generated by the launch of a new media institution staffed by able and keen young journalists[22]. Its total staff (including clerical, administrative and despatch personnel) numbered 48 by September 1952, including nine in London and two in Belfast. Along with some 100 free-lance correspondents, its staff journalists included Douglas Gageby as Editor in Chief, Jack Smyth, Derry Moran, John Healy (later 'Backbencher'), Karl Ross, Aidan O'Hanlon, Desmond Fisher (the INA 'Economics Editor' in 1953-54)[23], Philip Mooney, Lochlynn MacGlynn, Kevin O'Kelly (the INA Picture Editor), Kevin Collins and Michael Finlan. It had secured a back-to-back agreement with the Hearst-controlled INS news service in the United States, whereby INS carried INA-generated stories for its American clients, while the INA had a monopoly on selling the INS service to Irish media clients. This arrangement, which echoed Robert Brennan's priorities in particular[24], was seen as essential to the INA's successful functioning. So was its new photographic department, which achieved a coup of a kind by securing international distribution for the 'now famous picture of rioting in Derry City, showing Six-County policemen dispersing unarmed demonstrators'. Almost two decades before the Derry Civil Rights march was televized across the globe, the photograph was already a potent instrument of political policy: this particular picture, the agency proudly informed the government, was known to have reached an audience of 8,500,000 people, and it was 'probably the first time that a highly important political fact – viz. that partition is maintained by force – has been so effectively brought across to an audience of large dimensions'[25]. 'The quasi-monopoly in the handling of Irish news for the world's press', the Agency's Board added with satisfaction, 'once possessed by two or three of the great international news agencies, is now broken. Secondly ... the state of affairs whereby all Irish news was edited in London before issue ... is now a thing of the past'.[26]

Critics of the INA

While the new agency was thus trumpeting its triumphs, however, other forces, seen and unseen, were already gnawing away at its foundations. Professional journalistic pique (allied, in the case of the *Irish Press*, to political pique) at the well-subsidized nature of the agency's activities, was rapidly coming to the boil. From a different but equally predictable perspective, senior civil servants in the Department of Finance, viewing with alarm the agency's apparently insatiable appetite for cash advances, regarded with a growing scepticism its increasingly articulate but ultimately unconvincing promises of better times to come.

20. John Healy, personal interview, 2 May 1983. John Healy at one stage became 'Joan Duffy, INA Woman Feature Writer,' after provincial papers had asked the INA for a series of features of interest to female readers.

21. *The Irish Times*, 28 November 1959.

22. Its rapid development of an esprit de corps can be seen from the fact that the proposal to appoint Douglas Gageby as Editor in Chief led to unrest and the threat of industrial action, because he was an outsider. John Healy, personal interview.

23. Later with the *Irish Press*, editor of the *Catholic Herald*, a senior editorial executive with RTE and editor of the *Carlow Nationalist*.

24. He had suggested a somewhat similar arrangement as far back as 1921, but the idea had been overtaken by the Civil War crisis. Brennan to Taoiseach, 12 July 1952. National Archives S 14544.

25. Department of Foreign Affairs, Memorandum for the Government, July 1952. National Archives, S 14544 B.

26. Draft Report of the Irish News Agency to the Minister for External Affairs for 1951-52, National Archives, S 14544 B.

Paddy Quinn, the Reuter correspondent in Dublin and a senior journalist on the *Independent*, voiced his displeasure about the activities of the INA to the Department of the Taoiseach to such an effect that an investigation was set up. The *Irish Press*, enraged that an INA despatch on the famous 'Battle of Baltinglass' had been published in the *Gaelic American*, thundered editorially that it was 'a shameful perversion of the truth. And the Irish public has to pay for it'[27].

27. *Irish Press*, 3 January 1951. The 'Battle of Baltinglass' was a political dispute centred on the appointment of a sub-postmaster in the Co. Wicklow village of the same name.

The change of government on 14 June 1951 was accompanied by an intensification of NUJ pressure. In itself this was not surprising: members of the new administration had been openly hostile to the INA at its inception, and the NUJ presumably expected that they could now count on new and powerful allies at court. Against the run of play, the new Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, hesitated, his scepticism held in check by some powerful lobbying from within his own Department. Opposition questions from Fine Gael deputies Oliver J. Flanagan and Patrick Cogan, among others, pressed the Minister on the extent to which the INA was prepared to go into open competition with existing Irish media (as was indeed already happening). Aiken kicked to touch: the matters raised were 'solely the responsibility of the board of directors of the Irish News Agency'. Lurking in his ministerial brief was a sheaf of arguments from Conor Cruise O'Brien, including the fact that 'Nationalist Ulster' was particularly appreciative of the INA's work.

At one point, indeed, Aiken moved onto the offensive in support of the agency. The occasion was when the *Irish Independent* published an editorial on 8 May 1952 complaining at the fact that the INA's picture desk, which acted as the Irish agency for the international Planet photographic group, had been issuing photographs of 'vast and enthusiastic crowds carrying giant portraits of Marshal Stalin in Red Square'. The offending picture had in fact been published in the previous day's issue of the *Evening Herald*. 'I do not allege,' Aiken told Sir John Esmonde, the Fine Gael TD who had unwisely raised the matter in the Dáil,

> that the crowds in Red Square carried the giant portraits of Marshal Stalin because they were following the example of the *Irish Independent*, but within the last couple of years the Independent published pictures of Marshal Stalin with a smiling face; Marshal Stalin drinking a toast at the Kremlin; Marshal Stalin at dinner; and at least three other pictures of the same gentleman ... Indeed the *Independent* was so keen on publishing what it now calls Russian propaganda that in 1950 it ordered direct from the UP-Planet, and published, another photograph of massed units of the Red Army parading through Red Square.

Warming to his task, he went on to inform the Dail that 'the manager of the INA is the son of a TD, the brother of another, and brother of a senator. It will be news to these members of the Oireachtas that they are harbouring the chief of an anti-American, pro-Russian cell'.[28]

28. DD 15 May 1952, Vol. 131, No. 12. See also National Archives, Department of Foreign Affairs file 340/12/88/9.

The discussions with the NUJ had been precipitated by a *démarche* to de Valera on 22 November 1951 from T.P. Kilfeather, on behalf of the Oireachtas Press Gallery, expressing the Gallery's 'grave concern' at the 'unfair and unjust competition' of the INA, and expressing its alarm at the 'continued encroachment' of the INA, whose activities should be confined to those 'not harmful to Irish journalists'.[29] The nationality of those journalists currently employed by the INA was, conveniently, ignored. The agreement between the INA and the NUJ, which issued in a joint statement on 20 December, was a victory for the latter in all but name. Its main effect was 'to prevent the agency from selling domestic news or pictures to the Dublin dailies and the *Cork Examiner* ... Commercially, the effects of the agreement were naturally adverse'.[30] The agency's defenders in the Department of External Affairs located responsibility for all of this in a small but rather influential group of journalists who

29. National Archives, S 14544.

30. Replies from Department of External Affairs to queries from Cabinet sub-committee on the future of the INA, 15 September 1952. National Archives, S 14544 B.

are in large measure not engaged in the active collection of news. At least 90 per cent hold editorial positions on the Dublin daily newspapers and recast the news submitted to those newspapers by working journalists who receive no payment for the exported material. It is easy to see why such vested interests should be continuously and actively vocal in their opposition to a national news agency which pays cash for all news written.[31]

31. Department of External Affairs memorandum to Department of Finance, February 1953. National Archives, S 14544 B.

The *Independent* alone numbered among its staff journalists the Dublin correspondents of the Press Association, Reuters, Associate Press, the Exchange Telegraph, and a Canadian agency. External Affairs argued strongly that the agreement was being eroded in practice, and that the editors of the Dublin dailies frequently deplored it and urged the agency to scrap it, but without giving the agency any public support on the issue.[32] Nor indeed was the NUJ the only other organisation involved. The Institute of Journalists (IOJ) entered the fray twelve months later, with a statement signed by its secretary, Donal O'Donovan, registering a protest against the fact that 'journalists, as taxpayers, are compelled to contribute to a subsidy which is being used to menace their employment'.[33] Eighteen months later, the Institute of Journalists, together with the Guild of Journalists, warned the INA that it was unwise to deal with the NUJ alone, and that the members of their organizations would not consider themselves bound by any agreement between the INA and the larger union.[34] The Department of Foreign Affairs, in one of its most waspish rejoinders, said that the IOJ memorandum was 'known to have been drafted by Reuter's correspondent in Dublin'.[35]

32. Ibid.

33. *Irish Independent*, 8 December 1952.

34. Statement, 31 May 1954. National Archives, S 14544 C.

Financial Problems

The hard-headed servants of the Minister for Finance were not so easily put off the scent. Possibly emboldened by the knowledge that their new political masters were at best undecided about the value of the INA, they moved to take control of the debate, urging in a memorandum on 5 February 1952 that 'no time should be lost in reorganizing the agency on economic lines'. At this point the agency's losses for 1951-52 were put at £45,000, and its projected demand on the exchequer for the following year was for £40,000. For its part, the agency submitted a steady stream of figures to Finance, showing how the ratio between expenditure and income was improving: the following table shows its funding situation over the first four years of its operation.[36]

35. Department of External Affairs Memorandum to Department of Finance, February 1953. National Archives, S 14544 B.

36. Department of External Affairs Memorandum to Government, 29 June 1954. National Archives, S 14544 B.

INA FINDING, 1950 - 1954

Year	Total Expenditure	Exchequer Funding	Commercial Sales	Exchequer as % of total
1950-51	£45,038	£30,000	£2,116	91.8%
1951-52	£46,335	£45,000	£4,253	
1952-53	£76,802	£63,500	£14,778	81.1%
1953-54	£62,546	£45,000	£17,922	71.04%

The Minister for External Affairs also argued that the method of financing the Agency was inappropriate, in as much as the monies used in the first three years of its operation, although categorized as repayable cash advances, consisted in large part of capital sums. In its first year in operation, he demonstrated, the ratio of expenditure to revenue had fallen from 129:1 in the first quarter to 14.4:1 in the final quarter[37]. The Department of Finance, unimpressed, argued that the losses were incurred because the agency was

37. Draft of Memorandum for Government, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1952, National Archives, DEA 422/11/16/3.

> merely duplicating at considerable cost to the taxpayer a service which Irish newspapers are fully equipped to obtain from their own reporting organisations or through foreign news agencies. Furthermore, the value from a national standpoint of some, at least, of the items transmitted abroad, e.g., strike of seamen at Dublin port, sporting events, suspension of Marshall Aid, is questionable.

The agency, it argued, should be developed in such a way as to facilitate its eventual disposal to the Irish newspapers to be run on a cooperative basis.[38]

The matter was brought to a head in July 1952, when the Cabinet was faced with a request for a supplementary estimate for the agency in the sum of £38,500. The Cabinet eventually agreed, but with considerable reluctance: the price was the agreement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the establishment, on 26 August 1952, of a special Cabinet sub-committee to include, along with the two ministers most directly concerned, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs submitted some well-meaning but naive suggestions for reduction in costs, including the delightful proposal that foreign correspondents working in Ireland should be 'invited to plug Irish news of importance on a fee basis'. The Department of External Affairs shot down this particular brainwave with little difficulty: it would be

> open to the suggestion in Fleet Street that the Irish Government was attempting to corrupt journalists. The stories that were 'plugged' would still have to go to London offices who would be liable to throw them out – unless indeed it is suggested that fees should be paid in London also, in which case the £15,000 suggested would not go very far'.[39]

The question of reorganization was shelved, but came up again the following year, when a report on the agency's organization and methods was carried out by accountants Urwick, Orr and Partners for the Department.[40] The report suggested that no great changes could be recommended, and noted that 'discipline and morale undoubtedly reflect the enthusiasm and driving force of the General Manager and the Editor in Chief'. The net cost to the agency of the Irish News Service (INS) of £4,000 per annum, it advised, 'should clearly be accepted as a policy expense'.

In February 1953 Finance returned to the attack, stating bluntly that the agency should be wound up. Its decision on the dissemination of 'hot news' had been 'completely at variance with the Minister's engagements to the Dáil', and it had not been demonstrated that a continuance of the INA was warranted by its values as a national institution. If it were to continue, Finance noted, with the air of a chess grandmaster who has just checkmated an opponent,

> there would be a need for careful supervision of the agency's activities to ensure that only material clearly conducive to the national interest would be circulated by it for publication. Intervention of this kind would, inevitably, lead to charges of Civil Service control and Government interference. The agency could hardly hope to survive under such conditions'.[41]

External Affairs, replying, had to eat a certain amount of crow: the departure from the undertaking made by Mr MacBride in the Dáil was acknowledged – but this undertaking itself had been unrealistic. That apart, the Department fell back on what was essentially MacBride's old position: that to wind up the agency now would be a confession that Ireland had failed 'to shake off Reuter's dominance over the field of Irish news'.[42]

The Cabinet agreed to subsidize the agency to the tune of £45,000 for 1953-54, but determined that there should be no supplementary estimate, and that proposals for re-organisation would have to be tabled. The writing was plainly on the wall. The INA, for

38. Department of Finance Memorandum to Government, 5 February 1952. National Archives, S 14544 B.

39. Department of Posts and Telegraphs memorandum, 16 December 1952, and reply from Department of External Affairs. National Archives, S 14544 B.

40. Report, 10 January 1953. National Archives, S 14544 B.

41. Department of Finance Memorandum for the Government, 4 February 1953. National Archives, S 14544 B.

42. Department of External Affairs comments on Memorandum by department of Finance, February 1953. National Archives, S 14544 B.

its part, staked everything on a last throw. It terminated its agreement with INS and, in August 1953, made a new agreement with the United Press (despite the hostility of the UP correspondent in Dublin). This included taking over the UP contract with Radio Éireann, and involved the agency going on a 24-hour footing for the first time. The Government – initially unaware of this dramatic new commitment – was unimpressed, and decided in February 1954 that External Affairs, Finance, and the Attorney-General should consult on the drafting of a memorandum 'on the problems that would arise and the financial commitments that would be involved if it were decided to wind up the agency at an early date'. After this, events moved swiftly. Within a week, the Government subvention had been reduced by £10,000. Six days after this, an External Affairs memorandum revealed that the agency's assets were £64,240, and its liabilities £441,718 – more than half of the latter sum being due to UP under the terms of its 10-year contract. The Attorney-General reported that the agency was 'hopelessly insolvent' and, on 26 February, the Cabinet agreed to provide the INA with £45,000 for 1954-55; that there would be no funding for subsequent years, and that 'the agency should be requested to take, without delay, whatever steps may be necessary in the light of the decisions above'.[43]

43. National Archives, S 14544 C.

Roger Greene, the INA chairman, embarked on a frantic last-ditch attempt to stave off closure. The British paper wall, he told Aiken on 11 March, would be strengthened by a hostile international press. A critical question, of course, was whether the UP agreement could be repudiated. Aiken plainly thought it could be, and told Greene on 26 March that it would be 'futile' to seek a reversal of the Government's decision. Greene, while accepting that the UP contract could be terminated on a technicality, told Aiken on 8 April that Reuters had already been in Dublin propositioning some of the agency staff, and argued that 'the full significance of the Irish taxpayer having sunk approximately £200,000 in financing an Irish agency through its difficult formative years to hand it over to its main rival, a constant enemy of Ireland ... will not be lost on you'. The NUJ, he added, was already offering to close ranks in the light of this threat to the agency. Within the week, Greene had followed this up with a letter to de Valera, saying that a Government decision to bankrupt the agency would be 'an event without precedent in the history of the State'. Aiken replied on 23 April in a more eirenic tone, asking what effect a new agreement with the NUJ would have on the INA finances. De Valera, however, was less forthcoming, and did little more than forward a hostile opinion from the Attorney-General, Aindrias Ó Caoimh, to Greene, over his own signature, on 31 May.

Dissolution

Another change of Government on 2 June 1954, gave the agency an unexpected reprieve, and it seemed to enter an Indian summer. A Government decision on 2 July 1954 effectively rescinded the previous government's decision to wind up the agency, but on condition that it ran a tight ship and submitted a further memorandum on its plans. The new Minister for Finance, Gerard Sweetman, was not unfavourable. Writing to Liam Cosgrave, the new Minister for External Affairs, on 20 August 1954, he argued for increasing the INA's revenues rather than decreasing its expenditure, and that it should be continued, at any rate, for a period.

44. National Archives, S 14544 C.

> I know unofficially, that there is a possibility of a proposal being put forward that Radio Eireann should be governed by a corporation. I am prepared to explore even the possibility of fusing the agency and Radio Eireann under the same direction.[44]

The following week the Government decided to set up an inter-departmental committee to examine the whole question, to reduce expenditure on the agency, and to explore possible synergies with Fógra Éireann, Radio Éireann, and the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, as well as the possibility of a new agreement with the NUJ.

The inter-departmental committee, whose secretary was Sean Ó hÉidéan, decided that it was not within the committee's remit to deal with the major issue of policy, but reported that it had learned informally that 'the opposition of the NUJ to the supplying of internal news in the 26 counties is as strong as ever it was'. The most novel suggestion made by the committee as a cost-cutting exercise was that the agency's full-time journalists should be replaced by stringers who would excerpt stories from the national media for export.

> Such a practice of 'milking' news is, we understand, quite common in the newspaper world ... The proprietors do not give approval of the practice but they tacitly allow it so as to enable their best men to get additional emoluments'. If this were done, it might be possible to run a smaller agency which would, in addition, be more acceptable to journalists.[45]

By this time, however, the tremors of imminent dissolution had again begun to make themselves felt. J.P. Gallagher had resigned as General Manager. Roger Greene had died: F.W. Padbury had been appointed in his place, together with a new Board. Conor Cruise O'Brien had resigned, and with him, or so it seemed, some of the fight had gone out of the Department of External Affairs, which now told the Government that 'the material benefit which has accrued to the State from the operations of the agency has hitherto been negligible'.[46] The option of winding up the agency was again put on the Cabinet table, but temporarily withdrawn. The new Board, while it rejected the Department of Posts and Telegraph's plan to 'milk' the national media for the INA's export trade, was equally unrealistic when it proposed to External Affairs that the Agency be given the monopoly of the distribution of news emanating from abroad. The last option – disposal of the agency to the national newspapers – continued to be officially regarded as desirable, but impossible.

The agency might have dwindled gracefully to vanishing point over the following few years but for two other, contemporary factors. One was the unremitting hostility of the *Irish Independent*, which of course generally supported the Inter-Party Government. It published a hostile leading article describing the INA as 'a pure extravagance' on 9 November 1954. It returned to the fray on 10 February 1955 with a plea to the Government to 'spare the community further losses' by winding up this 'unqualified failure'.[47] On 9 January 1956 another leading article, its arguments a virtual paraphrase of those that had gone before, described the INA as an 'indefensible venture'. On 20 March its leader on the INA was entitled 'Pouring Money Down the Drain', and on 22 May it described a proposal to allow the INA to engage in the general dissemination of news within Ireland as 'audacious'! Two days later, for good measure, it published two anonymous letters giving similar arguments against the agency's continued existence.

More significantly, perhaps, the INA was also losing potential allies within the Cabinet. Early in 1956 the leader of the Labour Party, William Norton, wrote to Cosgrave to complain at the INA's circulation to Irish newspapers of a misleadingly sub-edited version of a speech he had made to American industrialists in the US. The misleading text had in fact come from United Press and, although the INA had on its own account put out a correction and the full text of Norton's speech an hour later, *The Irish Times* had used the offending version. Norton went for the jugular, copying his letter both to the Taoiseach and to the Minister for Finance.

> I gather, that there is no obligation on the Agency to see that the reports which they are supplying to the press are in accordance with public policy ... I have doubts on whether it is doing the job it was set up to do.[48]

The last nail had been put in the INA's coffin, but it took yet another change of Government to finally inter the corpse. The decision to close the INA was actually announced by the Minister for Finance, Dr. James Ryan, on 8 May 1957, in advance of

45. Report of Inter-Departmental Committee, 16 March 1955. National Archives, S 154544 D.

46. Department of External Affairs Memorandum for the Government, 13 January 1956. National Archives, S 154544 D.

47. *The Irish Times*, in that spirit of friendly rivalry which has characterised relationships between the national media, announced proudly on 30 April 1955 that its services to its readers would now be augmented by the UP-INA service. This gesture, coming as it did some five years after the INA's inauguration, was presumably largely symbolic.

48. William Norton to John A Costello and to Liam Cosgrave, 5 March 1956. National Archives, S 154544 D.

the formal Cabinet decision on 4 June.[49] The Managing Editor and the Chairman received a year's emoluments in lieu of notice. Executives got six months, journalists three months, and administrative staff two months pay. In a pitiful coda, the NUJ finally, and vainly, bestirred itself on behalf of its colleagues whose efforts it had been denigrating for most of the previous six years. Michael McInerney – whose personal bona fides were hardly in doubt, and who was acting on behalf of the Irish Area Council of the NUJ – wrote to the Taoiseach on 13 May to say that the Union was 'profoundly shocked' by the decision, affecting as it did the sixteen NUJ members who were still on the INA staff, as well as 100 other members who acted as stringers. On 29 May the General Secretary of the Union, H.J. Bradley, wrote from London to Mr de Valera to express his Council's concern (in language which seemed to have been quarried directly from one of Mr Sean MacBride's speeches) that Ireland, alone of the Western European countries, should be without a national news agency, and its perturbation 'that the employment of a considerable number of journalists in Dublin, Belfast, London, and the United States, would be affected by the closure of the agency'.[50] With such unlikely mourners, and with little fanfare, the INA finally closed its doors. Its obituary was a five-paragraph single-column story in *The Irish Times*, beginning: 'The Government-sponsored Irish News Agency, which was established in 1950, closed down last night. Its news service stopped at midnight'.[51]

49. Cabinet Minutes, Item 3, 4 June 1957. National Archives, S 154544 D.

50. National Archives, S 154544 D.

51. *The Irish Times*, 16 July 1957.

Conclusion

It is doubtful, given the circumstances of its birth, whether the INA could ever have been an unqualified success. Mr MacBride's parental pride blinded him to its many defects, and those who came after him were neither skillful enough nor, in the end, committed enough to overcome the hostility of key personnel in the journalistic profession and of the Department of Finance. One of these adversaries alone might have been enough to sink the enterprise – and yet the fact that it survived for so long in the teeth of such odds was itself a tribute to the sinewy pertinacity of its staff. Many years later Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, translated now to the cabinet table as Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, returned to the theme with only a hint of wistfulness, urging the creation of an Irish News Agency 'based on, and run by, the newspapers of Ireland outside Dublin, with a certain amount of State support'. He said:

> The concept I have in mind, is something distinct from the old Irish News Agency... A lot of good effort went to that Agency, and some of the best journalists in the country worked for it. But from its inception it suffered from certain radical defects. It was founded on the sole initiative of the Government of the day, without having enlisted the support of the press. Its ties to the State, and dependence on the State, were too close and too great. And it was aimed too much at the press outside this country, without being able adequately to fulfil the basic function of a normal news agency, which is to serve the press of its own country. I am convinced that a really viable Irish news agency must answer the needs of Irish newspapers, and must be controlled by them. It would also have to have the support of the journalistic profession and the National Union of Journalists. If those conditions could be fulfiled the State would be prepared to help, but its role would have to be one of support, not of leadership or control.[52]

The wheel had come full circle.

52. Speech to the Conference of Connacht Editors at Castlebar, 1 August 1973 (mimeo).

Attitudes on TV Advertising for Children: A Survey among Flemish Parents of Children Aged 6 – 12 years.

E. De Bens, P. Vyncke and P. Vandenbruane

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Introduction

The issue of TV advertising and children has always been quite controversial. From the early 1970s until now, hundreds of studies have been conducted on this topic.[1] Some of these studies are based on the observation of children in experimental situations. By their use of a non-verbal research method, these studies have the advantage of avoiding misrepresentation caused by some children's verbal skills when responding to verbal tests.[2] The disadvantage of this type of experimental research, however, is that the real-life validity of the results is sometimes quite low: the skillfully constructed research-experiments in which children's short-term reactions to individual stimulants (such as TV ads) are measured, do not always represent the real life situation in which the child is influenced by a great many factors – TV advertising being only one of them. Similarly, research data based on the actual questioning of children should be treated with caution, since younger children especially misunderstand the questions, lack the verbal techniques to provide an adequate answer, or are simply intimidated by the presence of the researcher.[3]

In this study, we chose a third method: to obtain evidence related to TV advertising and children by questioning children's parents. Parental attitudes towards the issue of TV advertising and children are of utmost importance to this issue, given the role played by the parents in a great many aspects of their children's lives. It is therefore quite surprising to learn that few other studies have hitherto shown interest in what parents think about the impact of TV advertising on their children.

Before reporting on some of these parental attitudes, we will briefly present some results of the research on TV advertising and children.

The influence of TV commercials on children: State of the art [4]

A common question is what the effects of TV advertisements on children actually are, and how strong and important they are. It should not be surprising that the various research studies that deal with this matter do not always offer similar conclusions or suggestions. A number of studies originated by consumer agencies or anti-advertising pressure groups tend to over-value the importance and the impact of TV advertising on children. According to these studies, advertising directed at children creates materialism, generates parent-child conflicts, hinders development of moral and ethical values, and misleads them about products. Moreover, they claim that advertising 'often manipulates these gullible innocents since they lack sufficient cognitive abilities to resist persuasive claims or because they do not understand the selling intent of commercials'.[5] Studies which are commissioned by the advertising industry, on the other hand, sometimes underestimate the impact of TV advertising on children. A few studies even indicate that there is no influence at all, which brings other commentators to question why companies keep spending millions of dollars on children's commercials if these commercials turn out to have no effect whatsoever.

1. For an introductory history of the issue of TV advertising directed at children, see Adler, 1980.

2. For examples, see Wartella, 1980 and Ward, Wackman, and Wartella, 1977.

3. See Verhaeren, 1991.

4. This review is based on the study TV Advertising and Children, Vol. 4, Gent, 1992. The study was carried out for the Toy Manufacturers of Europe, London by the 'Centre for Media, Opinion and Advertising Research' of the Department of Communication, University of Gent, Belgium, Department of Communication. Coordinator: E. De Bens.

5. See Brucks, 1988.

These conflicting views cause much harm, since they lead to various biased, pseudo-scientific publications on the matter, thus obscuring a number of established facts which have been accepted by a majority of independent research studies. In what follows, we will comment on some of these findings.

TV advertising aimed at children is usually believed to have an influence on the child's knowledge, attitudes, and values. It reportedly plays a role in establishing consumer socialization, for instance, by providing the child with the necessary information to make a responsible choice when functioning in the reality of the consumer society.[6] Research also suggests that TV advertising can be an important source of product information, since TV commercials can portray an item in a much more direct and visual way than can ever be achieved by advertising brochures, posters, or billboards.[7] Some studies, however, also state that extended viewing of TV advertisements may lead to an increase in aggression among children. It is hereby mentioned that, in particular, commercials with high levels of action, pace and visual changes lead to aggression, regardless of their contents.[8]

We should not forget, however, that most of the research on aggression consists of short-term experimental research in which the child's play behaviour or his/her preference for certain toys are observed after exposure to a number of commercials. Many methodological problems arise from this research, one of them being the question of the representativeness and the validity for real-life situations. From the results of our survey, it will be clear that parents themselves generally do not believe that TV ads stimulate misconduct or violent behaviour among their children. A much more important issue is whether or not TV ads lead children to make purchases or purchasing requests for the advertised brand. The answers to this question vary greatly according to a number of intervening factors. These factors include:

1. *The research method used :*

Experimental studies usually support the view that TV ads aimed at children have an important impact on the child's choice – some researchers even conclude that 'toy commercials can be more persuasive than the child's mother'.[9] Survey studies, on the contrary, indicate that TV advertising is but one out of a large number of factors influencing children's purchases or purchasing requests, and that consequently it has only a minimal effect on them.[10]

2. *The child's age:*

Some studies report that younger children are more influenced by TV advertising claims than older children[11], especially when they have to make a product choice out of a large quantity of very similar products.

This observation seems quite important, since real life consumer situations usually do confront children with a large variety of similar products (e.g. the various types and brands of computer games or breakfast cereals are largely similar as to their intrinsic qualities or outward appearances).

3. *Parents:*

Parents play a very important mediating role as far as the effects of TV advertising on their children are concerned. They can, for instance, provide verbal comment on the advertising messages or the products presented in these messages, and by doing so, they can greatly influence their children's interpretation of the advertised commercials.[12] (It should be mentioned, however, that the results of our survey indicate that parents seldom discuss TV commercials with their children).

Apart from this verbal comment, parents usually exercise direct control over the child's purchase and purchasing request behaviour. As far as children's purchases are

6. For example, see Smith, 1984: 30ff and Schneider, 1987:9.

7. See Donahue, 1984.

8. See Greer et al, 1982. Schuetz and Sprafkin (quoted byCondry, 1989: 62ff) examined a week-long sample of Saturday a.m. commercials in order to measure violence via content analysis.

9. See Prasad, 1978.

10. Some studies refer to this kind of research by using the term 'correlational paradigm', e.g. Goldberg, 1990.

11. See Kunkel, 1991.

12. See Donohue, 1984 :143-146 and Dorr, 1989 :35-51.

concerned, we should not forget that the amount of money that children have at their disposal (and that they can use freely for own purchases) is relatively small. Most purchases – especially when a larger amount of money is involved – are made by or under the supervision of the child's parents. Even though certain commercials may bring children to request certain purchases when shopping with their parents in the local supermarket, this does not automatically imply that these products will be purchased. After all, parents can still say 'no' when pestered by their child to buy a certain product.[13]

13. See Young, 1990.

Some researchers suggest that frequent denial of children's purchasing requests can lead to increasing parent-child tensions, conflicts and feelings of inferiority among children, or that TV advertisements eventually undermine children's confidence in parents.[14]

14. See Kapferer, 1985 and Kinsey, 1987.

4. Other influencing factors:

Whether or not a TV commercial for a product will have an influence on a child's purchasing request behaviour will also depend on the effects of other influencing agents, including the child's own experience with the product, comments made by the child's peers, the overall TV exposure of the child, other advertising sources (eg. catalogues), the cultural background, the socio-economic position and education of the parents, etc.[15]

15. See Young, 1990 and Galst at al., 1976.

All this shows that, in some situations, TV commercials can have an effect on children, but this will vary greatly from child to child and from situation to situation, depending on a number of external characteristics as well. Moreover, we should not forget that, apart from what we saw above, the precise nature of the effect of TV commercials on a child will vary greatly according to the way in which the child processes information from the commercial.

Various studies have been conducted in order to assess the various aspects of children's processing of TV advertising. Here too, data obtained by questioning parents can reveal interesting information. In order to be able to interpret parent's answers against the background of general research data on the matter, we will briefly point out some of these research findings.

The first step that influences the child's information processing of TV advertising and that, consequently, also determines its effects, is the child's exposure to TV commercials and the child's degree of attention to these.[16] Attention is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for advertising to have on effect: if children's attention to an ad is low, the effects of the ad will be low, but if attention to an ad is high, the effects can vary from strong to weak.

16. See Greenberg, 1986 and Calvert et al., 1989.

The second important step is the child's ability to distinguish between commercials and programmes. Most researchers see this ability as an important step towards the child's defence against commercial messages.Children who have not make this difference between these two categories are reportedly much more vulnerable to advertising because they have not yet developed a so-called 'cognitive defence mechanism' against the persuasive claims.[17] It is largely for this reason that a number of commentators object to the use of cartoon characters, heroes or famous persons in TV commercials aimed at children.[18]

17. See Wartella, 1980 :539; Condry, 1989: 174 ff, Blosser et al., 1985.

18. See Kunkel, 1988.

When popular figures from TV programmes are used, it becomes much more difficult to distinguish between commercial messages and programme entertainment, especially when younger children are involved and when the characters appear in commercials that immediately precede or antecede programmes featuring the same figures. Evidence on the child's ability to distinguish commercials from programmes is usually collected by observational tests or verbal questioning of children. In our survey, we asked the parents if they thought their child was able to do so.

The ability to make this distinction, however, is but one step towards a greater understanding of the commercial purpose behind a message, and, consequently, a greater skill in developing cognitive defenses.[19] If a child is able to distinguish between commercials and programmes, this does not mean that the child is also aware of the intent of commercials. As the child grows older, his/her awareness of the purpose of TV commercials increases.[20] A great many researchers thus suggest that it is a great help for children to be taught about commercial intent, both by parents and school teachers.[21]

The above research findings indicate that TV advertising aimed at children may have an influence on children, either by affecting children's attitudes or knowledge about products or by leading them to purchase or to purchasing request behaviour. However, since the interaction between TV advertising and children does not take place in a vacuum, many other factors intervene. This large number of intervening factors not only includes the various steps of the child's information processing activity, but also other influencing agencies, such as the child's peers, school or parents.

Since the influence of the child's parents in particular plays an important role in the interaction between TV ads and children, it is highly appropriate to devote some attention to what parents themselves think about this complex issue.

Parental attitudes on the effects of TV advertising on children.[22]

In early December 1992 a survey was conducted among Flemish parents of 6-12 year old children. In Flanders children celebrate 6 December 'St. Nicholas', a traditional festivity during which they receive presents of mainly sweets and toys. In the week preceding our survey (27 November - 3 December 1992), a total number of 138 toy commercials were broadcast on the national Flemish commercial channel VTM, with a total broadcast time of 62 minutes. This means that during the week preceding our survey the children were frequently exposed to TV advertising.[23]

The aim of the survey was to determine how parents experience and evaluate the impact of advertising on their children. The survey scanned the attitudes of the children toward TV advertising as seen by the parents: do they like to watch advertising or not, do they recognize advertising for what it is, are the commercial spots a topic of discussion with the parents? The parents were asked whether they accepted advertising directed at children, the degree of control that is needed, etc. A number of questions attempted to find out the extent to which children influence parents when they buy certain products and the role played in this by TV advertising.

In the last part of the survey, attention was focused on TV advertising for toys. Is television a more important opinion maker than the other advertising media? A set of questions on the desirability of less or more regulation for certain kinds of toys was also included.

In addition to the effect of advertising proper, the viewing behaviour of the children was surveyed, i.e. their channel and programme preferences, the time and length of viewing. These data contain interesting information on the questions of when and for how long children are exposed to TV advertising.

The sample and the socio-demographic variables

On Monday 2 December 1990 questionnaires were handed out in eight schools located in the medium-sized cities of Ninove (Province of East Flanders) and Ieper (Province of West Flanders). Each child, from the first to the sixth year of primary education, aged between 6 to 12 years old, was instructed to ask their parents to complete them.

19. See Kunkel, 1991: 64.

20. See Liebert et al., 1988: 169.

21. See Kunkel, 1991: 64; Young, 1976: 88-96; Wittebroodt, 1990.

22. The survey is part of the research project Children and TV advertising, Vol. 3, Gent, 1992 (see Note 4).

23. However, in Flanders the law prescribes that there must be a programme interruption of at least five minutes before and after children's programmes. Broadcasters circumvent this law by inserting short video clips (before or after a children's programme. Another way of avoiding the law is VTM's policy of defining children's programmes as 'family programmes'.

The children returned 1600 fully completed questionnaires, which obviously means that there was a very high rate of response. Since processing 1600 questionnaires would have been too time-consuming, 1000 questionnaires were chosen at random: they represent a more than sufficiently large sample.

The representativeness of our sample is shown by the socio-demographic data. The number of boys and girls in our sample, i.e. 554 (55.58%) vs. 437 (44.5), is close to the real distribution in Flanders of the sexes in the same age category, i.e. 51.5% boys vs. 48.5% girls. (State Register 1.1.1991). As far as age is concerned too, the survey closely approaches the real distribution.

The distribution over the different school years of primary school is spread evenly.

TABLE 1

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN SURVEYED:

AGE	N	%	Actual Distribution in Flanders
6 years	134	14	15.7
7 years	150	15	16.2
8 years	158	16	16.6
9 years	172	17	17.1
10 years	179	18	17.1
11 years	201	20	17.1
12 years	6	1	17.2

Total N=994

The socio-demographic data of the parents that completed the questionnaire are completely within what was expected: 90 per cent married, 98 per cent of Belgian nationality, 68per cent one to two children and 25 per cent three children. The social classes represented most strongly are the workers (32 per cent), junior and senior employees (34 per cent) and the self-employed (19 per cent). Most parents are between 30 and 40 years of age and therefore belong to a generation that has grown up completely with television. Seventy one per cent of the questionnaires were completed by the mother. It was stressed that the answers had to reflect the situation of the child that brought home the questionnaire.

Media use and TV consumption

TABLE 2.1

TIME SPENT BY THE CHILDREN ON THE FOLLOWING MEDIA DURING AN ORDINARY SCHOOL DAY

Media	0mins	1-15mins	15-30mins	30-60mins	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4hrs
Newsp	80%	18%	1%	-	-	-	-	-
Magaz	52%	38%	10%	-	-	-	-	-
Books	10%	31%	35%	17%	6%	-	-	-
Radio	40%	21%	19%	19%	7%	2%	-	-
TV	2%	4%	14%	35%	30%	10%	3%	2%
Video	67%	4%	9%	10%	7%	2%	-	-

TABLE 2.2

TIME SPENT BY THE CHILDREN ON THE FOLLOWING MEDIA DURING THE WEEKEND

Media	mins	1-15mins	15-30mins	30-60mins	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4hrs
Newsp	76%	19%	4%	1%	-	-	-	-
Magaz	45%	32%	16%	6%	-	-	-	-
Books	7%	14%	30%	27%	12%	5%	2%	1%
Radio	30%	10%	18%	16%	11%	7%	2%	5%
TV	-	-	3%	13%	27%	24%	16%	6%
Video	42%	3%	7%	13%	20%	8%	4%	4%

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that children devote most time to the medium of television. During a normal school day almost half the children watch for at least one hour; only one in five watch less than 30 minutes. At the weekend almost half the children watch two hours and more a day; 22 per cent watch as much as three to four hours.

In spite of the large choice of channels available (Belgium is highly cabled: 91 per cent of households and more than twenty TV channels are distributed), the children to a large extent prefer their own Flemish channels. The commercial station VTM (the only Flemish station with commercials) scores much better than the public service station (BRT): 60 per cent of the children consider VTM as their favourite station. The Dutch stations are in second place: this preference is obvious as a result of the language affinity. Among the foreign language channel, the French-speaking channels TF1 and RTV-TVI are preferred. Here again the commercial channels score better among children.

TABLE 3

PROGRAMME PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN

Programmes	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Children's News	11%	43%	46%
Typical Children's programme e.g. *Samson, Schuifaf*	68%	25%	7%
Cartoons	70%	29%	1%
Films for Children	41%	50%	9%
TV-series for Children	42%	46%	12%
Quizzes and Game Shows for Children	31%	53%	16%
Children's Shows e.g. Kinderacademie	37%	48%	14%
Videoclips	15%	39%	45%
The News	17%	51%	32%
Films for Everyone	18%	56%	26%
TV-series for Everyone	20%	53%	27%
Quizzes and Game Shows for Everyone	24%	58%	18%
Music Programmes for Everyone (Pop, Hit parade)	24%	51%	25%
Commercials	29%	60%	11%

Children obviously prefer children's programmes. The news programmes for children score badly because the Flemish stations do not broadcast children's news broadcasts. Yet, children often watch programmes that are not specifically intended for children. Mainly films, series, quizzes and game show but especially advertising spots are 'frequently' or 'sometimes' watched by children.

Children's attitudes towards advertising

The answers by the parents show that children like to watch commercials (56%), but are sometimes bored by them (55%). A large majority of the parents (79%) is convinced that their child recognizes the commercials as advertising.

The parents themselves accept advertising (62% are not irritated by advertising) but they think that control is desirable (71%). Only 12% are of the opinion that commercials aimed at children should be banned, and 9% think that all advertising should be banned.

TABLE 4.1

DOES YOUR CHILD LIKE WATCHING COMMERCIALS?

Very Much	Quite	Not that much	Not at all
11%	45%	34%	10%

Total: YES = 56%
Total: NO = 44%

TABLE 4.2

DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL ANNOYED BY COMMERCIALS?

Frequently	**Occasionally**	**Never**
8%	47%	45%

TABLE 4.3

DO YOU DISCUSS COMMERCIALS WITH YOUR CHILD?

Frequently	**Occasionally**	**Never**
6%	54%	35%

TABLE 4.4

DOES YOUR CHILD RECOGNIZE TV COMMERCIALS AS SUCH?

Yes, Always	**Yes, Usually**	**No, Usually Not**	**No, Never**
26%	53%	15%	5%

Total: YES = 79%
Total: NO = 20%

In contrast to what is laid down in many advertising codes of standard, the parents have no objection to cartoon heroes, comic strip characters or famous TV personalities being used in the commercial.

TABLE 5.1

SHOULD CARTOON HEROES OR COMIC STRIP CHARACTERS BE ALLOWED TO APPEAR IN ADVERTISEMENTS AIMED AT CHILDREN?

Yes	No
71%	29%

TABLE 5.2

SHOULD FAMOUS PERSONS OR CHARACTERS OUT OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES BE ALLOWED TO APPEAR IN ADVERTISEMENTS AIMED AT CHILDREN?

Yes	No
66%	34%

Purchasing products for children and the role of advertising

The table below shows that parents are mainly influenced by children when purchasing toys, soft drinks and sweets.

TABLE 6.1

DO YOUR CHILDREN INFLUENCE YOU TO BUY CERTAIN GENERAL PRODUCTS?

Products General	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	41%	48%	10%	1%
Soft Drinks	33%	50%	14%	3%
Toys	17%	41%	30%	12%
Sweets	35%	42%	17%	6%
Clothing	44%	34%	13%	4%
School Necessities	36%	40%	20%	4%

An important question here is the extent of the role of advertising in this. Parents claim that they are hardly influenced at all by TV commercials when buying something for their children. Only in the case of toys do parents seem to be influenced somewhat more by TV: 47%. According to the parents, the children are somewhat more easily influenced by TV commercials when buying something themselves. Again this is more often the case for toys than for other products: 70% are influenced to some extent, while the percentage is 43% for food, 57% for soft drinks and 58% for sweets.

TABLE 6.2

WHEN BUYING CERTAIN PRODUCTS FOR YOUR CHILD, ARE YOU INFLUENCED BY TV ADVERTISING?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	74%	24%	2%	-
Soft Drinks	70%	27%	3%	-
Toys	53%	36%	8%	3%
Sweets	70%	26%	4%	-
Clothing	78%	16%	4%	1%
School Necessities	72%	22%	5%	1%

TABLE 6.3

WHEN BUYING CERTAIN PRODUCTS, ARE YOUR CHILDREN INFLUENCED BY TV ADVERTISEMENTS?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	57%	33%	9%	1%
Soft Drinks	43%	39%	15%	3%
Toys	28%	37%	26%	9%
Sweets	42%	39%	15%	4%
Clothing	66%	24%	7%	3%
School Necessities	52%	33%	12%	3%

Concerning whether a child wants something no matter what after having seen a commercial for it on TV, the most frequent positive answer is again for toys: 18% for 'frequently' and 38% for 'occasionally'. Yet it should be remembered that, for other products, about two in three respondents claim that children do not necessarily want products for which they have seen TV commercials.

The role of TV advertising therefore does not seem to be so crucial in the decision to buy certain products for children. The parents do seem to be convinced, however, that in the case of toy advertising, television exerts a stronger influence than is the case in advertising for other children's products.

TABLE 6.4

DOES IT OCCUR THAT YOUR CHILD ABSOLUTELY WANTS CERTAIN PRODUCTS BECAUSE IT HAS SEEN THEM ON TELEVISION?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	11%	22%	33%	34%
Soft Drinks	11%	27%	33%	29%
Toys	18%	39%	26%	17%
Sweets	11%	29%	29%	31%
Clothing	10%	15%	27%	48%
School Necessities	11%	19%	30%	39%

Selection criteria for choosing toys

Our survey paid special attention to TV advertising for toys. The tables below strongly show a modification in the influence of television. Children choose toys mainly with the help of a brochure (88%), in the shop itself (79%), at a friend's (77%), and on television (61%). TV only comes fourth.

TABLE 7.1

CHILDREN'S CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING TOYS

Criteria	Very Important	Rather Important	Not Important
Child has seen Toy in Shop	22%	57%	21%
Friend has Toy	30%	47%	23%
Child saw TV Advert	14%	47%	38%
Child saw Advert in Brochure	39%	49&	12%
Child saw Advert in Magazine	11%	36%	53%
Child saw Advert on Poster	4%	22%	74%
Other Reason	27%	9%	64%

For the parents the decisive factor is that the children ask for it (98%). The brochure scores 66%, 'other reasons' 53%, the shops 44%, 'magazines' 32% and TV only 26%. The brochure therefore pushes aside television as an advertising medium here. Interpersonal communication such as contacts with friends and the wish of the child itself are important persuasive variables.

TABLE 7.2

PARENTS' CRITERIA FOR BUYING TOYS

Criteria	Very Important	Rather Important	Not Important
Child asked for it	60%	38%	4%
Parent saw TV Advert	4%	22%	74%
Parent saw Advert in Brochure	12%	54%	34%
Parent was recommended in Shop	10%	34%	56%
Parent saw Advert in Magazine	3%	29%	68%
Parent saw Advert on Poster	2%	1%	87%
Other Reason	45%	7%	48%

Regulations for specific TV advertising

The parents were asked whether they favour a complete ban on certain TV advertising aimed at children. Almost none of the respondents wants a complete ban but there are two major exceptions: 62% wants a ban on war toys and 20% a ban on computer and video games.

Parents often criticize the misleading character of TV advertising. Eighty-one per cent of the respondents states that TV ads do not always indicate the skills required to use the toy. There is also a certain apprehension about the creation of dangerous situations in TV commercials: 65% of the parents fear that children will imitate dangerous behaviour shown in TV ads and 66% think that TV ads exploit the children's immaturity of judgment and experience.

Conclusions

TV occupies an important part in the life of children: every day they spend a lot of time in front of the TV set. Most of the children watch TV for at least one hour a day and during weekends the time of exposure amounts to 2 or 3 hours a day. Children do not limit their viewing to children's programmes. Of the overall TV schedule films, series and serials, quizzes and game shows are watched frequently. This behaviour is confirmed by the children's exposure in time to TV: on weekdays they continue to watch television until 8.30 to 9 p.m. and during weekends they often watch until 10 p.m.

Children do not seem to like or dislike TV ads: 56% of them like to watch the ads while 54% are sometimes bored by them. Parents are not irritated by TV ads aimed at children (62%) but would like the ads to be subject to some kind of control (71%). Most of the parents (78%) are of the opinion that children are able to identify TV ads as commercials. They do not even object to the use of cartoons and television characters in commercials, even though most codes on TV advertising forbid this !

Parents are mainly influenced by children when purchasing toys, sweets and soft drinks. The parents claim that they are hardly influenced at all by TV commercials when buying something for their children. Only in the case of toys do parents seem to be influenced to a larger extent by TV. According to the parents, the children are more easily influenced by TV, especially by toy ads: 70% of the children are influenced to some extent. The impact of TV toy ads is strongly modified when the respondents indicate the different selection criteria for choosing toys: brochures, shops and magazines score higher than TV. Interpersonal communication such as contact with friends is also an important persuasive variable. The majority of the parents agree that toy advertising should be allowed but on condition that it is regulated. A minority want a complete ban and one third thinks regulations are not necessary. There is, however, a special concern for war toys and video games: 62% want a ban on war toys and 20% a ban on computer and video games. When drafting a code for TV advertising, this overt concern with respect to war toys and video games will have to be taken into account.

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Patterns of Irish Viewing

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Introduction

Analyses of the way people view programmes have been examined extensively in the USA and in the UK. For example, work by Barwise et al (1988), Collins et al (1982) and Ehrenberg (1990) is generally well known in the broadcasting area. Much of their work has to do with segmentation of the TV audience, audience flow, repeat viewing and audience duplication. This paper examines some of these concepts using Irish data from the AGB TAM panel.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section defines the Irish viewing structure and the TAM methodology. The second section examines the debate over the degree to which the TV audience can or cannot be segmented. The third section looks at programme loyalty and the last section examines viewers of episodes over a number of episodes. A special analysis centres on the *Glenroe* broadcasts in January 1992.

Market and Measurement

Although the Republic of Ireland is a small country, it has a complex TV broadcasting environment. All homes have the potential to receive not only RTE but also UK and satellite stations. In terms of reception, homes can be divided into three reception types: cable, multichannel-off air and Dual. The most recent figures from the TAM establishment survey are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

TYPES OF TV RECEPTION IN IRELAND

	Number (000's)	Homes %	Number of Adults (000's)
All Homes	1024	100	2474
Cable	398	39	969
Multichannel	281	27	722
Dual	345	34	783

Source: 1992 TAM Establishment Survey

Until recently, cable homes had the potential of receiving 12 or more stations without a decoder box as part of their annual cable subscription. During December 1992, Sky One and Sky News were taken off the Cablelink network. Multichannel off-air homes receive the UK stations as well as the two RTE stations from a roof top aerial. Dual homes can only receive the two RTE stations, RTE 1 and Network 2. For the purpose of this analysis, the target audience will be adults living in either cable homes or multichannel off-air homes. This audience will be referred to as 'Multichannel Adults', that is, all adults who have access to at least six stations.

In such a complex TV market, it is desirable to have the most advanced Television Audience Measurement system available. In 1989, RTE signed a five year contract with AGB TAM to measure Irish viewing. A specially designed peoplemeter (4900) is installed in 430 sample homes around the country. The homes are statistically selected to

represent all Irish TV homes. Each person in the home is assigned a person button on the meter handset. The handset also has buttons for viewers to record appreciation of programmes on a one to five point scale. The peoplemeter is connected to the telephone in the panel home and each night the TAM central computer contacts the homes and downloads the viewing information. The next morning the data from the 430 homes is validated and processed to produce ratings by noon of that day. The AGB peoplemeter also has a special probe which stamps all video recordings and playback.[1]

1. For a more detailed description of the service see Harper (1989)

The daily results are accessed online by RTE and the advertising agencies. In addition to the normal TVR's (television ratings) used to rank programmes and commercials broadcast on RTE, the data is stored for monthly secondary analysis. Fortunately, the growth of personal computers and accompanying software has made the manipulation and study of secondary TV data easy.

The time period of the study is selected periods of time in 1992. All results are based on RTE 1 and Network 2 programmes unless specially stated. They were produced through a PC package developed by TAM called TELESCOPE.

Segmentation

During 1990 there was an interesting debate in *Admap* between Hugh Johnson (1990) and Andrew Ehrenberg (1990). This debate centred on the question of TV audience segmentation in relation to programme types. Hugh Johnson argues that 'there is a strong propensity for those viewing a programme of a particular type to want to watch more of the same genre.' Andrew Ehrenberg argues that TV audiences are unsegmented and that 'as groups of TV viewers, we are mostly very similar in the broad types of programmes we watch.'

This section will examine the segmentation question with Irish data. 'Segmentation refers to a programme (or a certain type of programme) being viewed mainly by some identifiable population subgroup (e.g. younger people, owners of hi-fi equipment etc.)' (Barwise & Ehrenberg, 1983). The first step with regard to the Irish data is to group programmes into similar types. For the month of February 1992, approximately 500 programmes were classified into the following types for RTE 1 and Network 2 broadcasts.[2]

2. See appendix for a detailed list of programmes within each of these nine types.

TABLE 2

CLASSIFICATIONS OF PROGRAMME TYPES ON RTE 1/NETWORK 2, FEBRUARY 1992

Type	Number of Programme Types
Soaps	6
Sit-Coms	13
Drama	16
Talk Shows	5
Sports	4
Films	15
News	6
Serious	16
Irish Language	5

The 500 programmes represent 85 per cent of the total programmes broadcast on RTE in February 1992. Although the analysis does not include all types of programmes, the inter-demographic comparisons should still prove useful. For the month of

February, the amount of time spent viewing these programme types was calculated and compared to the total time viewing RTE by the different audience groups. The results from this TELESCOPE analysis are presented in Table 3.

If TV audiences are largely unsegmented, then there would be little variation in the way that different subgroups allocate their viewing across the different programme categories. Table 3 is quite similar to results produced by Barwise and Ehrenberg in terms of the two social class groups. Although C2DE generally watch more RTE television, the proportion of time spent viewing the different programme types is roughly the same. There does not appear to be any significant difference between ABC1 and C2DE for any of the programme types. (Note that social class 'F' [farmers] has been excluded). It may be that these two social class groupings are too broad to highlight viewing patterns and that finer analysis, on say AB's, would produce different results. Table 3 may also raise the question of whether more relevant 'Lifestyle' groupings can thus be discerned. In terms of the standard social class grouping the Irish data would confirm Ehrenberg's conclusion that TV audiences are largely unsegmented.

TABLE 3

ADULT VIEWING BY SOCIAL CLASS AND AGE
RTE 1 AND NETWORK 2 – FEBRUARY 1992, 14:00 – 23:59

	Average Viewing Per Day mins	Soaps %	Sit Coms %	Drama %	Talk %	Sports %	Film %	News %	Serious %	Irish %
Adults	108	9.5	4.5	8.8	4.4	4.1	6.9	9.1	5.0	2.6
ABC1 Adults	78	10.0	5.5	9.0	4.2	4.6	8.1	9.0	5.7	2.7
C2DE Adults	114	9.7	4.5	9.1	5.1	3.8	7.2	8.9	4.6	2.5
15-24	72	13.8	6.1	8.8	4.3	5.2	9.3	7.4	4.1	3.5
15-34	78	11.8	5.7	8.9	4.1	4.8	8.8	7.6	4.6	3.2
35-54	102	9.7	4.2	8.9	4.3	4.2	7.6	8.9	5.2	2.6
55+	168	7.3	3.8	8.3	4.4	3.2	4.8	10.3	4.7	1.7

In terms of age groups, however, there does appear to be a significant difference in the types of programmes into which adults can be segmented, for example, young people spent a higher percentage of time viewing soaps and sit-coms while older people (55+) spent a higher proportion of time watching news. These age differences are distinct from the Barwise & Ehrenberg work which found that subgroups 'all tend to spend much the same proportion of their viewing time on the various types of programmes available.' They did, however, find some 'small differences in profiles of children, teenagers and to some degree sex (i.e. men and sports).' It does seem difficult to accept that the uniformity of the TV audience with the demographic targeting by programme type is not possible. Indeed, agency time-buying is largely based around the concept of audience targets and it is generally accepted that clever buying will produce better results for the defined target audience. As market research techniques improve, and if sample sizes are large enough so that finer sub-sample analysis or alternative lifestyles clusters can be studied, then there may well be support for the programme segmentation approach.

In broad target groups, adults, men, women, housekeepers etc, the Irish data is similar to the UK in that these groups have similar programme type profiles. Ehrenberg (1990) states that 'the average UK viewer watches only about three of the Top Ten programmes in a given week.' This is also true in Ireland as demonstrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF TOP 10 PROGRAMMES
RTE 1 / NETWORK 2, 1992

		Average No of Programmes viewed	Viewing (%)				
			1+	2+	3+	4+	5+
Week Ending	23 February	2.8	59	40	26	18	12
	1 March	2.8	68	47	31	21	13
	8 March	3.0	67	50	34	22	41

Table 3 shows that the average Irish adult watches three of the Top ten programmes for that week. Roughly 65 per cent view at least one of the Top Ten and only around 13 per cent see five out of the Top Ten. On average three of the Top Ten are viewed and it is a different three for different people during the week. The remaining 20 or so hours of viewing by adults for that week is spent watching less popular programmes and again these will be different ones for different people. As in the UK, these results show the difficulty in finding sizeable subgroups or segments with a common viewing habit. Ehrenberg would argue that 'as individuals the TV audience is almost infinitely divided into segments of one as it were.'

In spite of the findings here, a more detailed study which examines finer subgroups might well show more distinct TV viewing segments. Often the research does not have robust enough sample sizes for segmentation study. For example, a separate run of the data showed AB Adults spending 7.3 per cent of their TV time watching serious programmes while DE adults, spend 4.1 per cent of their TV time on the same programmes. These results, however, would have to be treated with caution due to the low sample size.

While TV audience composition may be difficult to summarize into groups, programme loyalty and level of repeat viewing do seem to fall into consistent patterns.

Loyalty and repeat viewing

The level of audience overlap between different episodes of popular programmes screened on different days or in different weeks has been estimated at about 50 per cent in the UK and at about 40 per cent in the USA (Barwise and Ehrenberg, 1988). What is the level of audience overlap and duplication in Ireland? We have run a number of analyses with TELESCOPE on the TAM data to examine these statistics for different programmes in Ireland. The results are based on the rule that each viewer included must see at least 50 per cent of the individual programme.

Great Los Angeles Earthquake

On Wednesday 12 February 1992, the first part of the two part action drama mini-series was shown on RTE 1 at 21:15. On Thursday 13 February the second part was broadcast. This programme received a multichannel adult TAM rating of 10 on Wednesday and 14 on Thursday. How many viewers of the programme on the Wednesday tuned in to watch the second part on the Thursday? Table 5 shows that 18 per cent of Multichannel Adults viewed at least one of the episodes but only 6% viewed both. Of the 163,000 viewers (10 per cent of 1.6m) who watched on Wednesday, only 60 per cent or 97,800 tuned in again on the Thursday. Hence, 40 per cent of the viewers of the Thursday episode did not see the first part. Is this typical of other programmes shown on RTE? For example, would we expect this level for *The Late Late Show* or *Kenny Live*?

TABLE 5

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF
GREAT LOS ANGELES EARTHQUAKE, 1992

Potential = 1,625,000	TVR %	Viewed* at Least 1 %	Viewed* Both %	Repeat Viewers %
Part 1– 12 February	10	-	-	-
Part 2–13 February	14	18	6	60

*VIEWED AT LEAST 50% OF PROGRAMME.

Twelve programmes broadcast in February and March 1992 were analyzed and the results are shown in Table 6. The audience was examined from one week to the next for each programme. For example, *The Late Late Show* on the 21 February received a multichannel rating of 30. A week later, however, it received a multichannel rating of 32. Not all of the viewers who tuned in on the 21st also viewed on the 28th. In fact only 20 per cent viewed both (2+). Forty-three per cent of multichannel adults saw one of the two broadcasts and the repeat level of viewing (i.e of the 30 per cent on the 21 February who also viewed on 28 February) is relatively high, at 67 per cent. The overall average of repeat viewing for the 12 programmes examined here is 52 per cent. This is approximately the level found in UK studies (Barwise & Ehrenberg, 1988). These results imply that for RTE programmes, about half the people who see a repetitive programme one week see the next episode in the following week.

TABLE 6

MULTICHANNEL ADULT
REPEAT VIEWING OF SAME PROGRAMME/DIFFERENT WEEK

Programme	Date	TVR	1 +	2 +	Repeat
			%	%	%
The Late Late Show	21/28 February	30			
		32	43	20	67
The Late Late Show	28 Feb/06 Mar	32			
		30	42	19	59
Kenny Live	22/29 February	17			
		21	28	10	59
Winning Streak	21/28 February	21			
		18	29	10	48
Winning Streak	28 Feb/06 Mar	19			
		21	20	11	58
Bibi	12/19 February	11			
		13	18	7	64
Bibi	05/12 February	9			
		11	15	4	44
Secrets	22/29 February	12			
		14	20	5	42
thirtysomething	26 Feb/03 Mar	14			
		15	22	7	50
Today Tonight	25 Feb/03 Mar	14			
		15	22	7	50
Head to Toe	25 Feb/09 Mar	14			
		12	20	6	43
Check-up	25 Feb/03 Mar	8			
		12	17	3	38
	Average				**52%**

Glenroe

This concept of duplication and patterns of viewing can be applied to the popular soap *Glenroe*. Table 7 was produced by the TELESCOPE package for the month of January 1992. Table 7 shows that while 60 per cent of multichannel adults viewed at least one of the four *Glenroe* episodes on a Sunday, on average they viewed two of the four episodes in the month and only 7 per cent viewed all four. The repeat viewing level from 5 January to 12 January was 52 per cent.

TABLE 7

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF *GLENROE*
SUNDAYS, JANUARY 1992

Date	TVR	No. of episodes viewed	Viewing % 1 +	2 +	3 +	4 +
5 January	31	1.0	31	-	-	-
12 January	30	1.3	45	16	-	-
19 January	35	1.8	54	31	11	-
26 January	35	2.2	60	40	25	7

One might argue that those viewers who missed the Sunday episode will catch it on Network 2 on the Thursday. Table 8 examines these episodes for multichannel adults. The Thursday repeat of *Glenroe* achieves lower TVR's, lower cumulative audience (1+, 2+, etc.) and less repeat viewing (13 per cent for 2 and 9 January). One can not simply add the 22 per cent of the Thursdays shown to the 60 per cent of Sundays to find the net reach of *Glenroe* for the month. Some *Glenroe* viewers will move from Sunday to Thursday and some will watch both. Combining all the episodes (Table 9) results in a total cumulative audience of 65 per cent (those multichannel adults who viewed at least one of the nine *Glenroes* episodes in January).

TABLE 8

MULTICHANNEL ADULTS VIEWING OF *GLENROE*
THURSDAY, JANUARY 1992

Date	TVR	No. of episodes viewed	Viewing % 1 +	2 +	3 +	4 +	5 +
2nd January	8	1.0	8	-	-	-	-
9th January	6	1.1	12	1	-	-	-
16th January	6	1.2	16	3	0	-	-
23rd January	7	1.4	20	6	1	0	-
30th January	6	1.5	22	8	3	1	0

TABLE 9

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF *GLENROE*,
THURSDAYS AND SUNDAYS, JANUARY 1992

Date	TVR	No. of episodes viewed	Viewing % 1 +	2 +	3 +	4 +	5 +	6 +
2 January	8	1.0	8	-	-	-	-	-
5 January	31	1.1	36	-	-	-	-	-
9 January	6	1.1	39	-	-	-	-	-
12 January	30	1.5	51	-	-	-	-	-
16 January	6	1.5	51	-	-	-	-	-
19 January	35	2.0	59	-	-	-	-	-
23 January	7	2.0	60	-	-	-	-	-
26 January	35	2.4	65	-	-	-	-	-
30 January	6	2.5	65	-	-	-	-	-
Summary		2.5	65	46	32	15	4	1

Table 9 shows that of the nine *Glenroe* broadcasts in January 1992, 65 per cent of multichannel adults viewed at least one and on average they viewed 2.5 episodes. Note that the *Glenroe* shown on 30 January did not 'pick-up' any new viewers. That is, there was no increase in the 1+ category of 65 per cent. Of the 97,500 viewers of *Glenroe* (6 per cent of 1.6m) on 30 January, all of them saw at least one of the eight earlier broadcasts. Note that the average number of programmes viewed, 2.5, is not much of an increase on the Sunday episodes, as shown in Table 7.

Further analysis of the viewing over the month shows a high level of loyalty to the Sunday viewing of *Glenroe* but a low level of loyalty to the Thursday one with virtually zero level of duplicated viewing (Table 10).

TABLE 10

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF *GLENROE*
SUNDAY TO SUNDAY, THURSDAY TO THURSDAY, JANUARY 1992

Sundays

DATE	DUPLICATION %	REPEAT %
1. 5/12 January	16	52
2. 12/19 January	20	61
3. 19/26 January	22	59

Thursdays

DATE	DUPLICATION %	REPEAT %
4. 02/09 January	1	13
5. 09/16 January	1	17
6. 16/23 January	1	17
7. 23/30 January	2	29

For 12 and 19 January (line 2), 20 per cent of multichannel adults viewed both episodes of *Glenroe*. On the Sunday, 61 per cent of those who viewed on the 12th also viewed on the 19th. Compare this to the 1 per cent of multichannel adults who viewed *Glenroe* on Thursday 9th and 16th (line 5) with 17 per cent of those who viewed on the 9th tuning in the following week.

Although the low repeat level of audiences for the Thursday episodes is a function of the low level of ratings, the Tables do seem to show different viewing patterns for the two days of the week. The Thursday audience is fragmented with little built in cumulative audience and an insignificant level of consistent viewing from one week to the next. The first showings on the Sunday, however, have a high degree of loyalty from one week to the next with a high duplication rate, around 20 per cent for two consecutive episodes.

There does seem to be a higher level of repeat viewing moving from a Thursday to a Sunday than from a Thursday to Thursday suggesting that some viewers of the Thursday missed the previous Sunday episode, but got back on the track with the Sunday following the Thursday viewing session. A final analysis was checked to determine the degree of *Glenroe* addiction, that is, the level of multichannel audience who view both Sunday and Thursday episodes in the same week. On average for any given week, about 7 per cent of multichannel adults would view *Glenroe*, first on the Sunday and then again on the Thursday. This apparently high level could be justified. It may be that these 7 per cent of viewers missed the beginning or end on the Sunday and view again on the Thursday to see the bit they missed.

Audience Cumulation

The above analysis has confirmed, for a small sample of RTE programmes, that people who watch a regular programme do not generally watch every episode of the series. This paper now turns to three serials that are broadcast frequently throughout the month. Table 11 shows the results for Multichannel adults viewing in February 1992 for *Coronation Street*, *Home & Away* and *Neighbours*.

During February, 46 per cent of multichannel adults (747,500) saw at least one episode of *Coronation Street*. Their average was four episodes throughout the month. 28% of them saw just one episode, 15 per cent saw two and so forth. Results for *Home & Away* on Network 2 and *Neighbours* on BBC 1 are also shown in Table 11. The results for the 13:30 showing of *Neighbours* is surprisingly high with 38 per cent of multichannel adults seeing at least one episode of *Neighbours* at 13:30. It is interesting to note the success of *Neighbours* at 13:30. BBC show the same episode of *Neighbours* later in the day at 18:30. Results for the 18:30 show are lower, possibly due to increased competition. It may be that multichannel adults are taking the 13:30 opportunity to view *Neighbours* and then some other programme at 18:30 (e.g. *Home & Away*). These results are consistent with results found in other countries, that is, relatively few viewers see all or nearly all of the episodes in any serial. The reverse side of this is that as 'the reach' of these regular series is high, very large numbers of viewers will have seen at least one or two episodes over the season. The reason for the low level of repeat viewers of soaps in Ireland, as in other countries, is more a matter of variable social customs and habits rather than a lack of appreciation of the programmes.

TABLE 11

MULTICHANNEL ADULT VIEWING OF CORONATION STREET, HOME AND AWAY AND NEIGHBOURS, FEBRUARY 1992.

	No. of Episodes	Reach	Average No. Seen	Number of Episodes seen by percentage Viewers Reach = 100%									
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Coronation Street (Network 2)	(12)	46	4	28	15	15	7	4	9	7	4	4	7
Home & Away (Network 2)	(20)	43	6	19	14	7	7	7	7	7	2	5	25
Neighbours (BBC1 13:30)	(20)	38	5	34	10	11	3	8	3	5	3	3	20
Neighbours (BBC1 18:30)	(20)	33	4	39	18	9	6	6	6	3	3	0	10

*Viewers must see 50% of episode to be included.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the behaviour of the RTE audience from a 'pattern of viewing' perspective rather than the traditional quantitative method, (i.e. TVR's or thousands of viewers). In general, the pattern of viewing in Ireland is quite similar to the viewing patterns in the UK. While it may not be easy to segment Irish audiences, it is not impossible. In the period studied here, the broad traditional audience groupings by social class has not produced a significant segment in terms of viewing programme types. An age grouping analysis has shown some variation by different types of programmes. It is also suggested that an acceptable 'Lifestyle' grouping of finer sampling breakdown might continue to produce results supporting segmentation.

It was also found that on average, multichannel adults watch only three of the RTE Top Ten programmes in a given week and that the average repeat level viewing for high rating programmes is about 50%. The in-depth analysis of *Glenroe* showed a loyal audience to RTE 1 on Sunday nights, but a highly fragmented audience to Network 2 on Thursday night. Finally, as in the UK, frequently broadcasted serials like *Coronation Street* reach a wide audience, but very few of these people watch all or nearly all the episodes.

Appendix

Classification of programmes into programmes types

Drama	**Serious**	**Sit-Coms**
Hotel	Questions & Answers	The Love Boat
Maigret	World In Action	Dear John
The Corner House	Ethopia – The Time Is	Kate and Allie
Young Riders	Lecture by President Robinson	All for One
Home Front	ENG	Empty Nest
The Hitchikers	Today Tonight	The Golden Girls
Lou Grant	Greek Myths	Cheers
Streets of San Francisco	Master Works	Murphy Brown
Dick Francis Mysteries	Radharc	Love at First Sight
Twilight Zone	*Radharc* in Retrospect	Roseanne
Midnight Caller	Women at War	Family Ties
MacGyver	New Lease of Death	Major Dad
Love at First Sight	Women of the World	The Cosby Show
The Flying Doctors	Market Place	
Matlock	Visions of Europe	
Baywatch	National Symphony	

Soaps	News	Sports
Emmerdale	Six-One	Italian Soccer
A Country Practice	News	Sport Stadium
Home & Away	Nine O'Clock News	Soccer – Ireland v Wales
Coronation Street	Network News	Know your Sport
Thirtysomething	Late News	
Glenroe	The One O'Clock News	
Films	**Irish**	**Talk**
Lethal Weapon	Cursaí	The Late Late Show
Color Purple	Nuacht	Kenny Live
Buster	Súit Thart	Bibi
City on Fire	Seachtain	Secrets
That Secret Sunday	Scaoil Amach Bobaili	Live at Three
Sybil		
Leo the Last		
King of the Mountain		
Destry Rides Agian		
How to Commit a Marriage		
Vendetta for the Sai		
Marty		
Three Days of the condor		
Mama's Going to Buy you a Mocking Bird		
Chisum		

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Producing The Arts Show: An Ethnographic Study of Radio Producers at Work

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Introduction

This article presents some preliminary findings based on a study of the Radio 1 programme, *The Arts Show*. For a period of four weeks in November/December 1992, the author made an observational study of the production activities on the programme, the purpose of which was to look at the specific occupational activities and competences of the radio producer.[1] During this time I conducted an ethnographic study of the production routines and processes involved in the making of this programme. I observed the daily routines associated with the research, planning and recording of the programme. I also sat in on the weekly production meetings which all production personnel attend. At the end of the research period, I interviewed each of the three producers involved in the programme. The main findings of this article concern how producers individually and as a team negotiate the structure or format of the programme they work on; the pre-eminence assumed by the commodities of 'broadcast material' and 'broadcast time' in the production process, the orientation to institutionally agreed features of what constitutes 'good radio' and how the audience is conceived by producers in the course of their production work. From the point of view of producers, these findings are mundane ones: these are the everyday activities that a programme maker in radio has to deal with. An assumption of the approach in this study is that it is in the realm of the mundane that the distinct and unique features of broadcasting are to be found.

A sociology of broadcasting is not normally conceived in this way. The dominant tradition in the study of broadcast institutions is a macro approach with little to say about what institutional processes are.[2] An exception is Tom Burns' *The BBC – Public Institution and Private World* (1977), a wide ranging study which has at its core a valuable account, based on interviews, of various aspects of professional ideology within broadcasting. This study of the occupational milieu of broadcasting is, because it proceeds from participants' own accounts, the closest we have of what it means to work as a television or radio producer. However, the focus of the analysis in Burns is on the examination of the public service ethos as it existed at various levels within the BBC and is less concerned with the interpretive accounts produced by members of the organization.[3]

Underlying the conventional approaches to the sociology of broadcasting is the assumption that the rules by which news journalists, radio and tv producers operate are important topics of study in their own right. The criteria for selection in news production, for example, are seen to be of major consequence given the dependency on broadcast sources of information. The rules of broadcasting production should constitute an important topic of study but not in isolation from their use as a resource within broadcasting situations. A basic principle of the ethnomethodological perspective within sociology, for example, is to look at meaning in individual situations of interaction as an on-going accomplishment of the members involved.[4] To look at just what makes broadcast work meaningful, means beginning with participants or actors' own knowledge and common-sense categories of what constitutes distinctness or meaning in the activity. It means looking at the background expectancies and assumptions which members use to interpret their situation and achieve intersubjective

1. I would like to acknowledge the support of *The Arts Show* production staff who granted me access to their programme and thank them for their assistance in the research for this paper.

2. By this I mean principally the study of the political economy of broadcast institutions as for example in Murdock (1988).

3. Later studies in this vein include Philip Schlesinger's *Putting Reality together:* BBC News (1978) - focussing primarily on institutional discourses and constraints on the production of news; Jeremy Tunstall's *Journalists at Work* (1971) - on the work of special correspondents; Peter Golding and Philip Elliot's *Making the News* (1979) - partly researched at RTE. More recent ethnographic studies of the television production world include: Roger Silverstone's *Framing Science* (1985) - a study of the making of a Horizon documentary and Andrew Hart's *Making the Real World* (1988), also a study of the making of a television science programme.

4. Garfinkel in his 'studies of work' programme claims that many social scientific studies have tended to be 'about' rather than 'of' occupations - cf. Heritage (1987). An ethnomethodogical approach to the study of broadcasting would seek to reveal the 'just thisness', the distinctness of broadcasting to the situations from within. Apart from the work of Heritage and Greatbatch on news interviews (1991), ethnomethodology as a perspective has not been used to study broadcast situations. A model for such a study might be provided by Michael Lynch's *Art and Artifact in Laboratory Science* (1985), and ethnomethodological analysis laboratory work.

understandings. It means looking at the common wisdom and culture of the broadcast environment and how members of this exclusive club make sense of their private world. A secondary theme of this study, therefore, is the attempt to formulate the appropriate methodology to study the locally produced order of broadcast situations.

Producing *The Arts Show*

The Arts Show was first introduced in 1987 as a thrice weekly arts magazine programme broadcast in the early evening at 7.00-7.45pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. With the introduction of *The Arts Show* there was for the first time on radio a serious commitment to covering the arts in a comprehensive way. This was demonstrated in the number of programmes, three a week; the time slot of 7.00-7.45pm; and importantly, the assignment of a team of producers, a researcher and a permanent presenter. The decision to have a popular personality presenter in Mike Murphy was also significant as an attempt to make arts programming more accessible. Now in its fifth year *The Arts Show* is generally acknowledged to be a success and a vindication of the decision to go for a populist and broad approach to arts coverage on radio.

The team responsible for producing *The Arts Show* now comprises three producers permanently assigned to the show as well as a broadcast assistant who looks after administration. The team of three producers bear sole responsibility for what appears on the programme. A rotation system is operated by the team so that each producer takes a week in turn for producing the show. The programme will typically comprise a mix of studio interviews or reviews plus a number of taped reports. Some will have been in preparation for some time, others will be recorded on the day of transmission.

After five years, the programme has developed a certain pattern in its coverage of arts events. The standard format consists of four to five items featuring reviews and reports on arts happenings with an average duration of eight minutes each. A programme might contain a review of the opening night of a theatre production, a review of a film, a report on some arts event, perhaps a preview of a festival, and an interview with an artist. Within this format, the producers opt occasionally to vary the programme with a number of 'specials'. Programmes can be devoted to a single topic – such as an artistic profile. There are also occasionally live outside broadcasts sometimes featuring performance. Major festivals such as the Wexford Opera Festival or the Galway Arts Festival are often featured as special editions of the programme. The magazine format has allowed *The Arts Show* to have a policy of fairly broad coverage of the arts across the country and to be as inclusive as possible when it comes to representing different art forms. It also allows the programme to react quickly to events and to function as a topical magazine of current arts events.

The Production Routine

Like many other media products, radio programmes are produced according to a definite and standardized routine. Planning and development constitutes one major phase of activity in the producing of the programme. This concerns short, medium and long term planning of material for production.

The most visible aspect of production is recording and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays work on the programme revolves around the afternoon studio recording session. The 'producer of the week' usually spends the morning gathering the material which will be used in the afternoon's recording such as tapes of reports, music if it is to be used and commercials for insertion into the programme. Guest reviewers and interviewees will be scheduled to come to studio at the appropriate time for recording. Once all items are finalized, the producer proceeds to compile the running order for the programme and write the 'briefs' for the presenter. Practice on writing briefs varies from one programme to another with some presenters requiring long, detailed briefs which will need no further input from the producer. On this programme, the practice is that

the producer will write fairly short briefs on individual items but will informally discuss each segment of the programme with the presenter beforehand.

Recording itself takes place during a two hour block in one of the studios in the RTE Radio Centre subsequent to a short discussion with the presenter. The programme is recorded sequentially, item by item, stopping only between segments allowing guests to be brought in or tapes to be cued up. Some rehearsal does take place: a producer will discuss the angle or the direction of the interview with the guest and the presenter beforehand. During recording, the producer sitting at the console next to the sound engineer will be able to communicate with the presenter via a talkback channel, normally only to remind the presenter on time and occasionally to prompt a question. With taped items, the presenter normally simply 'intros' the item as it is recorded onto the master tape. Unlike the frenetic pace of live broadcasting, recording a programme is a relatively relaxed affair. Any time left over in studio is often used for editing a package or prerecording a feature for use in a later programme. Both studio and editing time are at a premium and care is always made to make the optimum use of this scarce commodity.

With the rotation system, the pressures of broadcasting – writing scripts, recording, timing, making quick decisions about content, putting programmes together to tight production deadlines – fall on one producer. The other two members of the team spend the time planning and setting up items, recording reports whether in Dublin or around the country, editing packages or finishing reports for use in a later programme. Working hours vary on the programme: a lot of time is spent going to exhibitions, attending opening nights or viewing cinema previews. Work such as this by its nature happens at all hours. Equally, editing time for putting together the packages is usually outside the daytime schedule when studios are less busy with recording and live broadcasts.

The Production Process

The world of the radio producer is one dominated by the activity of filling the empty space on programme schedules. Producers are responsible for originating programme ideas, executing and organizing the production of these ideas and making all necessary arrangements for the final delivery of a programme for transmission. The two commodities that producers are primarily working on in the production process are programme content and broadcast time.

Programme content consists of the individual, relatively self-contained segments that make up a complete programme. Each item is given separate attention by a producer as to its content, scope and duration; items have their own production schedule and often require individual technical and editorial consideration. In some cases, individual programme items may be commissioned out to freelance reporters who take total responsibility for the production of that item. Normally, a producer will have a number of individual items in production at any one time and at various stages of completion. Some may exist only as vague ideas or leads to follow up in the future. Others, if they are to be recorded in studio, may be 'set up' – arrangements already having been made and contact established with the participants on the item and ideas formed as to what shape the item is to take. With prerecorded reports there are various stages of production involved: from the initial programme idea, through the stages of planning and arranging, recording and editing of a completed 'package'.

As they work on and complete programme content, the other commodity that producers are concerned with is broadcast time. Just as individual programme segments can be said to be one dimension of the production process in radio, the other dimension that stands out clearly, particularly in studio environments, are units of broadcast time. In the case of prerecorded packages, the production of broadcast time is complete and it is imported into the programme running order with little extra comment other than noting its duration. For the reporter recording the package, the actual

duration required is an important consideration as it gives an idea of how much to record in an interview. Theoretically, a package can be edited to any length but the editing process is made much more difficult and tedious where the recording ratio to required package duration is too high. In live broadcast situations and in recording studio items for *The Arts Show*, producers are constantly negotiating and working around the spaces of allocated time for each item. An interview might be allocated eight minutes in a typical programme but if something sparks during the recording that the producer finds particularly interesting, they may allow it to run a little longer. Such over-runs have to be compensated for by deducting time from subsequent items. This is rarely a problem in live broadcasting where producers are very much attuned to the flexible negotiation of time between one item and the next. In *The Arts Show* there is less flexibility given the high number of prerecorded items which establish fixed blocks of time around which producers have to manoeuvre.

Each producer's practice of managing time is different. Some use stop watches – backtimed from the end of the programme so that they are constantly working with remaining time rather than elapsed time. Others use a clock or stop watch on each individual item and count only to the allocated time they have arranged on the running order. Time management is a crucial skill of the radio producer and one which requires quick responses and some experience in this type of decision making. One of the senior producers of the show is noted for having an almost intuitive sense of time with a seemingly effortless capacity to fit material into available spaces. Another producer who had just come to the show having worked on a live, daytime programme, found the change in pace and the whole conception of time quite different, which took a lot of getting used to.

Planning and Decision-Making

The formal occasion and venue for making decisions on *The Arts Show* is at the weekly production meeting. Production meetings in broadcasting generally serve the important function of putting future programme content 'up for grabs', allowing for discussion and a free exchange of views between all those associated with research and production. In contrast to studio work which requires a definite running order with a list of items and accurate timings, there are few certainties in the production meeting: there are possible items and possible guests; stories have to be researched and speakers have to be checked out. Tapes have to be edited and all timings are approximate. The aim of the production meeting is to develop planning talk and planning ideas in to realizable 'ideas for items', particularly with regard to the forthcoming weeks' programmes.

With *The Arts Show* a large number of fixed items or regular events and occurrences can be entered in a diary such as the Dublin Theatre Festival, the DGOS (Dublin Grand Open Society) Winter Season, Galway Arts Week, the Cork Film Festival. Such fixtures help to lessen the uncertainty of how to fill programme space. There are also the not quite so predictable but still regular run of theatre opening nights, new cinema releases, and new book publications, all of which help to structure the planning process for the programme. The programme staff like to think of *The Arts Show* as a newspaper of the arts in which an event of any significance in the arts world will appear. This throws the onus on producers to keep up to date with what is going on not only in local art circles but also with art thinking generally. They must be well informed on coverage of the arts elsewhere and must be able to react swiftly and knowledgeably to events as they happen much as would happen in a current affairs environment. This professional concern with topicality is indeed another dimension of the sense of broadcast time with which producers deal.

On a regular programme like this planning is a process that goes on all the time, not only at production meetings. Between producers themselves there is a constant exchange of ideas and views on programme content, not only on the regular, relatively fixed items that come up for review, but also the types of features and reports that

appear on the programme. Many such features begin as press releases or notices sent into the programme which will be followed up if there is a vacancy or if the idea catches the imagination of one of the producers. Equally, there is word of mouth and the network of contacts that producers build up throughout their careers. The latter method is often preferred by producers who regard press releases and professional publicity seeking with a certain disdain. Many producers prefer to follow up their own leads and develop their stories in their own way. However, as a general rule in broadcasting, despite the best efforts of well-intentioned producers, there is a randomness in the way much material is chosen for programmes. There appears to be a hierarchy of certainty of which material will be included in the running order of a programme according to the prominence and importance an event is deemed to have within the arts world. As one descends the ladder of certainty into contingency, all sorts of issues come into play such as who knows whom, whether there is room in a programme, the individual tastes of a producer and so on.

Working to a Format

The notion of a format in radio concerns the sense of structure or identity of both programmes and stations and is something that transcends individual programme makers. An important aim of establishing a format is to encourage audience identification and establish an expectation within the audience about the nature of the programme as a whole and its subject matter. *The Arts Show* has a recognizable structure or format in the manner in which certain types of content are presented. This is not necessarily worked out consciously beforehand and is often represented as a pattern which emerges, that which seems to best suit particular subject matter or audience involved and functions almost as an intuitive sense on the part of producers. Coming to the programme from having worked on a daytime radio programme for a number of years, one producer described the change in terms of the very different response that seemed to be demanded:

> First of all I found that the thing I had to do was kind of really slow down the way I was listening... It wasn't that I wasn't familiar with *The Arts Show* because it's a programme I've always listened to but it was just that in studio terms, whatever it was for the last four years I've been going in there kind of hyped up and doing all those things so that in studio terms I was really slowing it down to listen to it.

It is an important principle with producers that a programme does not become predictable and that a structure does not become a rule. One of the core values of broadcasting is that it remains fresh and continues to challenge listeners rather than simply respond to expectations. The danger that *The Arts Show* producers try to guard against is falling into the habit of producing the five item programme of eight minutes duration each. A format can become an oppressive and restricting structure inhibiting creativity and preventing producers using their initiative. Programmes become formulaic when they no longer respond to real audience needs and are merely generating programme material out of a preexisting pattern. The continual need to reassess how programmes are made and looking out for new angles and ways of approaching material constitute for producers one of the most difficult challenges in broadcasting.

Making good radio

There is a saying within RTE that when it comes to developing programme material 'it doesn't matter what the hell it is or what it's about as long as it makes good radio'. One of the basic competences informing the work of radio producers is what might be termed an orientation to this feature of what makes 'good radio'. This is a set of general assumptions which include but go beyond the customs and conventions by which radio is produced. It can be an intuition about what worked well in an interview, for example,

values that are invoked when making decisions about who should appear on a radio programme, for how long they should talk and how an item should be structured. As an expression of the craft involved in making radio programmes, it is an orientation shared by all radio producers. Sometimes openly discussed, it more often than not remains at the level of a background assumption of radio professionals.

What makes 'good radio' depends, firstly, upon a knowledge of the medium, of what is distinct or unique about radio, and an ability to harness those characteristics. *The Arts Show* in the words of one producer is a programme that attempts in its coverage of the arts to exploit the 'resources of radio' and in reviewing theatre or film will regularly illustrate that review with a clip from the play or extract from the film soundtrack. Equally, taped reports must exploit the basic resources of speech and sound and convey in the recording a sense of the place and occasion. Another producer describes a characteristic of radio that she particularly likes to exploit was the ability of radio broadcasting to link up remote locations via telephone lines from various regional studios and to create a sense of a programme 'coming from everywhere'. The ability to recognize these resources and to use them to good effect is a core element of what radio producers learn through experience.

Secondly, 'making good radio' depends on a producer's ability to make professional judgements on the programme material at hand. A producer will, for example, open a programme with the 'sexiest item' in order to grab an audience's attention and will balance reports, interviews and music in a way that maximizes the programme's appeal and coherence. Recognizing 'sexy' items as well as negotiating the type of balance demanded by the programme involves a range of skills of discrimination that in part has to do with a knowledge of the arts but also bears an important relation to questions of programming and knowledge of the audience.

A programme like *The Arts Show* receives a lot of press releases and publicity material. Choosing from this pool of material requires an understanding of the institutional rules of what is going to work well on radio. On a superficial level, such rules will necessarily vary from one programme to another where criteria will be informed by different audience considerations or a different programme profile. Yet at a more fundamental level, there is a remarkable consensus within the radio industry of what kinds of voices are appropriate, what types of music are suited to particular occasions, what duration items should last, how programmes can be balanced and so on. It is perhaps not too crude to describe this as a common orientation to or agreement on entertainment values in radio. On many occasions, at meetings where particular names or items were being discussed, an overriding consideration in most instances was 'How good was somebody on radio?' Often what qualifies an individual or a particular type of story as being 'good' is a quite intangible thing such as the quality of somebody's voice, their ability to speak fluently and in an entertaining way, their ability in an interview situation to interact with the presenter of the programme, and a familiarity with the processes of media communication. Certain individuals often reappear on programmes as panelists and guests because they understand the rules of interaction in a broadcast interview and they know the limitations of time which the broadcast situation imposes.

A negative stereotype is the description of being a 'worthy' programme. A 'worthy item' implies an event or a story that has some importance and is something that ought to be covered but unfortunately makes for boring or bad radio. For the producer who wants to break new ground or take a different approach, the challenge is to overcome the tag of 'worthiness' and combine originality with the exigencies of radio; in other words, combining the need to be interesting and informative with the need to be entertaining.

The Audience

The audience for any particular programme is something which in one sense producers decide in advance. Commercial radio, for example, targets a programme to a

specific audience segment. In Radio 1, such decisions take place against the background of RTE's public service commitments to cater for a wide variety of interests and in some instances to produce programmes of very specific and limited appeal. *The Arts Show* falls somewhere in the middle between attempting to appeal to a broad cross section of people and producing a minority interest programme. Its method of achieving this is by balancing its coverage between the popular and more exclusive arts and its populist manner of presentation.

For radio producers, feedback from the audience is a very important part of the production process. It allows a producer to take stock of how production is being done and assess how well it is meeting the requirements of the consumer. Many daytime radio programmes have a fairly direct process of feedback where the audience is allowed an opportunity to participate in the show whether by phone or letter. *The Gay Byrne Show* has an enormous post bag which in itself functions as a barometer of audience reaction. With *The Arts Show* there is a conspicuous absence of direct feedback from the audience for a number of reasons. For one, there is no opportunity in the programme for participation whether by phone or by letter. A small amount of post comes into the programme for the presenter Mike Murphy, but nothing about the programme as such or in reaction to individual items. Secondly, there is very little audience research being done by RTE at the moment. The polling research commissioned by the radio advertising industry generally, the JNLR reports, gives minimal information about the constitution of the audience but does not have any facility for listeners' reactions to programmes. Producers of *The Arts Show* do, of course, get feedback on their programmes of a more informal nature. This can come from one's peers, friends and colleagues. Much of this also comes from the arts world, itself an important part of the audience, and with which *The Arts Show* maintains close contact through the very process of producing programmes.

In the absence of such knowledge, it is interesting to view the kinds of conceptions producers have of their audience and both the level of knowledge and the kinds of interests they envisage their listeners to possess. The programme aims to address a broad audience comprised of ordinary people, non-specialists with a general interest in the arts. There is some disagreement about how successful the programme has been in that regard. Some feel that the programme has been too narrow and elitist in the past and are worried that a programme defined by 'arts' automatically precludes a lot of people. Producers can be very sensitive to the charge of becoming elitist and for some it is important to adopt the perspective of the 'ordinary punter':

> I'm very interested in the arts but I would regard myself as somebody who is just an ordinary punter and I thought that that would be a bit of an advantage because I would say that my criticism would be that perhaps the programme has on occasion got a little high blown.
>
> ...for the ordinary listener I think that there should be a kind of accessibility to things, that we're not all experts ... because I think people have very lively and intelligent minds and want to hear about things. And... I'd be less inclined to pander to an audience of ... say the established Arts Show audience of people who are listening for their reviews and things like that and who would have fairly ...developed ideas on what's happening in the arts. I mean I would be much more interested in broadening the scope and including other people as well ... making sure there's a populist kind of appeal to it. But it's difficult to do that with something that's established itself as an 'Arts' programme with a capital A.

Rival conceptions of the audience often come to the fore in choosing who actually appears on a programme. The topic of who should review for the programme is, for example, frequently an occasion for discussing not only who would be qualified to do a review but also who a review is being aimed at. The choice of reviewer can make all the difference to the tone of a piece and how it is addressed to the audience. In general, there is a commitment to treating the arts seriously on the programme and this involves

inviting reviewers whom are relatively specialized in their field, either professionally or from an academic point of view. This is less the case with popular arts such as films and popular music where a less specialized response is called for. Occasionally, very different kinds of people will be invited to review for the programme: politicians, celebrities, ordinary people who present an alternative or off-beat view.

The personality who has had the most prominent influence on how the programme is perceived is, of course, the presenter, Mike Murphy. His ability to reach a wide audience is seen as crucial to the success of the programme. He maintains a populist appeal for *The Arts Show* while also facilitating a forum for serious discussion and consideration of the arts. All producers on the programme are agreed that such populism is important as a guard against the more extreme and elitist versions of arts broadcasting:

> You can be as elitist as you like but at the end of the day, the man manages to get around an awful lot of different areas and to sort of carry it off. I mean to make it amenable at all, accessible at all to people you have to have somebody presenting it who is with well known and who will just get the non-artistic audience.
>
> What's great about Mike and it's one of the things that makes the programme very good is Mike absolutely cuts through the shit. He won't take pretentious nonsense from anybody. He'll ask straight questions and he'll find out what it's about ... there's a touch of the Mister Everyman about him.

Conclusion

In this study I have made some observations about the working activities of radio producers making programmes. I have commented on what I see as the features of locally produced order in the making of *The Arts Show*. The world of the radio producer revolves around the activity of filling programme space during which producers are preoccupied with segments of programme material and units of broadcast time. Various organizational features of the broadcast environment have been shown to have an important bearing on how this is accomplished: the format of the programme as it is reproduced by producers of the show; the orientation towards established conventions of what makes for 'good radio'; and the twin public service commitments to serving minority interests and broadcasting to a wide audience. The version of public service in this case exhibits a high degree of populism and orientation to what is perceived to be relevant and of interest to ordinary, non-specialist members of the audience. Significantly, the production of populist radio with high entertainment values is seen as a necessary defence against the elitism that an arts programme might normally imply.

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Thirty Years A 'Growing: The Past, the Present and the Future of Irish Broadcasting

T.V. Finn

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Early Years

Way back in the early months of 1960, the then British Prime Minister, Harold McMillan – whose most memorable phrase until then had been his salutation to the British public 'You've never had it so good' – made a six-weeks tour of the African continent. By the time Mr. McMillan arrived in Cape Town he was geared up for another phrase-making speech, this time to the assembled members of the South African Parliament: 'The wind of change is blowing through this continent, and, whether we like it or not, this growth of the national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it (3 February 1960).' That speech itself is long forgotten, but the phrase 'the winds of change' is still remembered. They were, indeed, beginning to blow then in South Africa and, in more recent times, have reached hurricane-force on occasion.

When I look back on my own more than thirty years in broadcasting, that phrase holds special resonances for me. In European broadcasting – and certainly in Irish broadcasting – if there were any winds blowing in the early 1960s they were only the gentlest of zephyrs, relatively balmy, mostly cooling and invigorating us, rather than knocking us out of our stride or dramatically off-course.

Consider the broadcasting environment in this country some thirty years ago. There was then one medium-wave radio service – no VHF – and, out of the 24 hours of the day, that service was closed for longer than it was open. There was one television service, known variously as 'Telefis' or 'Bealach a Seacht' – or, less kindly because of the number of studio programmes relying on 'talking heads', 'radio with eye-strain'. These television programmes – all in monochrome – were received by only 290,000 homes in the State. The transmission standard was 625 lines and also 405 lines for those homes already possessing older receivers. In certain parts of the country – mainly in the Northern areas and along the Eastern seaboard – UK services could already be received; BBC Northern Ireland since 1953, for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and UTV since 1959. But there was no BBC 2, no Channel 4, no satellite, no cable, no home video or camcorders, although the American company, AMPEX, had launched video for the broadcasting trade in 1956. There were no remote switches for 'zapping' and no rental video shops. But there were plenty of cinemas where we queued, patiently, and often in the rain, for memorable (forgettable?) epics such as *West Side Story*, *Breakfast at Tiffanys*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *La Dolce Vita*.

Commercial television had already taken off in Britain with Roy – later Sir Roy – Thomson describing his Scottish TV franchise as 'a licence to print money'. Lew Grade got on board also at an early date providing entertainment which owed its genesis more to the music hall than the new TV medium. This prompted one wag to announce that Britain now had two types of television, high grade and Lew Grade.

With Telefis Éireann developing, and other services rapidly becoming available throughout Europe, that zephyr of Force One I mentioned earlier stepped up a couple of notches in 1962 when we saw, via Telstar, a satellite transmission from the United

States. I can still remember the date – 23 July – and the live baseball game from Chicago included in the transmission, the striking face of Big Ben and Richard Dimbleby's dulcet tones providing the British link. However, at the time there was no hint of Marshall McLuhan's 'global village'. That satellite transmission was regarded as no more than an 'interesting' experiment.

Major limiting factors then, in both production and distribution technology, virtually ensured that broadcasting was still a state monopoly – not in the strictly commercial sense where the customer could be exploited, I hasten to add. It was highly regulated and, mostly, a very responsibly run monopoly, but a near-monopoly nonetheless. And, perhaps inevitably given technical and other restraints, it was not the adventurous forum we know today, which may have fathered the (anonymous) description 'Television is the bland leading the bland' or which led the comedian Groucho Marx to conclude 'Television is a medium of entertainment which permits millions of people to listen to the same joke and yet remain lonesome'.

Throughout the 1960s many factors began to work to produce a more open and questioning approach to the issues of the day: John F. Kennedy was President of the United States; Pope John XXIII presided over Vatican Council II; Western economies generally prospered. Foreign travel was no longer the preserve of the wealthy and business classes – the 'package' holiday business was up and running. In our own country there was a new air of dynamism, a new emphasis on 'get up and go', on the arts, on music, on culture, on the opening of windows on society as a whole. There was tragedy, too, in the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and his brother, Robert, and Martin Luther King. The Vietnam War raged on. Conflict continued in the Middle East, China under Mao Tse-Tung remained a closed society, and the Northern 'Troubles', dormant for a number of years, suddenly erupted again. All of these developments were reflected by broadcasting in numerous ways, not least in informational and analytical programming. Television was now 'on scene' at many events throughout the world. *Seven Days* on television and *This Week* on radio were outstanding examples of Ireland's contribution.

In the United Kingdom in 1968, BBC 2 was launched, providing new programme diversity. There was mounting pressure for a second UK commercial channel, although Channel 4's birth was some years down the road. But, all in all, the 1960's brought a golden age to broadcasting in these islands and I consider myself fortunate to be able, now to say, 'I was there'.

Difficulties and Restructuring

In the 1970s, there were more difficult times with the world oil crisis hitting open economies like our own particularly hard. There were also key developments affecting broadcasting in that decade. Firstly, the introduction of licenced cable television to Ireland. It began in 1970 and, in those early days, it was forbidden for a single system to have more than 500 subscribers. This measure was adopted to moderate the growth of cable and give the then single channel RTE television a reasonable chance of competing with our much more affluent neighbours across the Irish Sea. Gradually, the '500 restriction' was relaxed and, by the middle of the decade, serious debate was taking place about choice in television. In the event, it was decided that RTE should set up and operate a second channel. On 2 November 1978 the second TV channel opened with a major entertainment programme from the Opera House in Cork as the chosen launch vehicle.

Secondly, the technology of broadcasting, particularly on the radio side, was becoming very 'user friendly' – and I'm not talking about the arrival of the 'trusty tranny'. As a result, many unlicenced local stations began to pop up all around the country. RTE had only one radio channel to counter this development and, if only on that account, was at a disadvantage against 'the pirates' as they were known. An early

response was Radio na Gaeltachta, launched in 1972. Eventually, the Government decided that a second national RTE radio channel should be approved and Radio 2 (now 2FM) was born on 31 May 1979. It immediately proved popular, with a lively mixture of music, news and other programming. But many of the pirates continued to operate – and some to flourish – for another ten years. Broadcasting legislation in 1988 eventually brought order to that whole scene and laid the foundations for the Independent Radio and Television Commission to regulate and oversee it.

By the end of the 1970s, the zephyrs of the 1960s had become brisk and slightly chilling winds. RTE had two colour television channels (colour had come in 1971), but four UK channels were now widely available. We also had three national radio channels, but there was a plethora of unlicenced operators for most of the decade as well. Competition was the name of an intensely fought game.

The 1980s brought little respite. Now the satellite was starting to intrude in earnest into our scene. At the same time, through miniaturisation, production equipment had become portable, lightweight and not very costly. It was now possible to make programmes, particularly those of a simpler kind, very easily and distribute them by renting a transponder on a satellite. The European Commission in Brussels also began to take more than a passing interest and broadcasting began to feel the consequences of the Treaty of Rome – particularly in relation to trans-frontier broadcasting and opposition by the Commission to 'exclusive' deals for rights to sporting and other events, which were seen as potentially in breach of the anti Competition Articles in the Treaty.

Around the same time – in the mid-1980s – the Government also commissioned a detailed consultancy analysis of RTE. All of us in the organization recognized this as the equivalent of a gale warning. Why? We were producing only thirty per cent of our television output, the remainder coming from foreign sources. Morale was low and the bank overdraft was high: too high at £10 million. It was a time for in-depth analysis of our function and future. Outside RTE, the Government-ordered survey was interpreted as part of an anti-RTE bias, a desire to clip RTE's wings, a continuation of an argument which always seems to fill the void between Government and broadcasters, not only in Ireland.

In the period since the consultants produced their report[1], all of us in RTE have got stuck into the many priorities which needed to be addressed. Hours of television transmission increased from 3382 hours in 1978 to 7600 hours last year (1991). In the same period, home-produced material has reached 45 per cent of all transmissions. And the RTE share of the multi-channel audience has risen to 50 per cent. The bank overdraft has been eliminated and the number of employees reduced by 350. The licence fee – £4 for black and white in 1962 – remains at £62. There has been no licence fee increase for six and a half years, despite inflation. All this has been achieved in a broadcasting environment where 70 per cent of homes now have considerable choice, provided by external television services, and where 30 per cent of homes have video recorders.

1. Stokes, Kennedy, Crowley (SKC), *Review of Radio Telefís Eireann, 1985*. Dublin: the Stationery Office [eds.].

Influence of RTE

This has been a fairly rapid tour of the Irish broadcasting scene over the last thirty or so years. Later I will return to other issues which have exercised corporate thinking and attitudes during the period. But perhaps I could now dwell on what difference the much increased availability of radio and television has made over that time in Irish society.

Television, particularly, is regularly trumpeted as the most powerful instant medium in the world. (The American entertainer Ernie Kovacs once said that television is a medium because 'it is neither rare nor well done'). We are all aware, I think, of the mountains of paper which have been produced on television and its real or imagined influence. Boiling it all down, it seems to me that broadcast television is a modest enough agent of change in society and it is quite an exaggeration to attribute Svengali-

like powers to it.

In particular, it has always struck me how readily politicians accept this notion of the alleged power of television. When they do a 'good' interview the feedback from their immediate colleagues and party supporters can lull them into believing that actual achievement does not matter so long as you do well on the 'box'. There are times when I feel that too many of our politicians take the short term view of events, rather than a more considered and gentler reaction. I realize how seductive the 'sound' bite on television and radio can be in terms of reaching large audiences – thousands of people no politician could hope to reach through old-style public meetings and door-to-door canvassing. And the politicians have some justification for blaming 'the media' in creating the rent-a-quote syndrome. There are times when the instant response could be replaced by more thoughtful analysis.

Not that I share Hilaire Belloc's political epitaph:

> Here richly, with ridiculous display
> The Politician's corpse was laid away
> While all of his acquaintance sneered and slagged
> I wept: for I had longed to see him hanged.

And I am certainly not advocating the response of the former Prime Minister of China, Chou En-Lai, who was once asked what thoughts he might wish to impart on the French Revolution. He thought for several minutes and then said 'It's too early to tell'.

In case anyone feels that I am about to embark on a politician bashing exercise, let me emphasize here that I admire and respect most of the politicians I have met over the years. Unlike those of us in the media world, politicians have to seek their mandate directly from the people – every few years in general, and every few months in the not-too-distant past. They plough a difficult and lonely furrow and are certainly not overpaid for their commitment and lengthy hours of service to their constituents. But I do feel they place too much emphasis on the power of broadcasting and broadcasters. Of course, broadcasting does have its influences on the way we shape and live our lives – not always without controversy. In earlier days, the majority of broadcasts were rehearsed and recorded, a more leisurely approach allowing time for assessment and review where required. Many so-called 'live' programmes were, in fact, recorded shortly before transmission time – others were made up of pre-recorded segments with only the studio links 'live' in that sense of the word. And, on radio, some programmes had time delays of ten or more seconds built-in, allowing producers and editors the facility of hitting a panic button to eliminate foul or abusive language or defamatory material before it could be aired.

That changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s through a combination of new broadcasting technology and the availability and much wider access to an improved telephone network. The result: the birth of the 'phone-in' and 'talk-back' radio. Today, telephone participation is encouraged in some television programmes, but it does impose certain visual constraints and, consequently, is not always successful. However, the 'phone-in' has become an essential part of radio programming – a safety valve for those wishing to let off steam or make their views known on the issues of the day. From *Morning Ireland* through the Gay Byrne and Pat Kenny shows to Marion Finucane's *Live Line* and other programmes you can hear the authentic voice of Ireland. Given the present rather cumbersome parliamentary procedures, which do not allow for immediate full-scale debate on major issues, broadcasting has become the instant vox populi, with radio fulfilling a role which many people now see and refer to as the 'Parliament of the People'. Ideas are exchanged, contentious issues are debated – sometimes deadly serious, sometimes frivolous and humourous. And the RTE audience figures underscore the programming popularity. But 'live' programming in this purest form brings with it the attendant need for extremely stringent application of 'balance and fair play' set down in the Broadcasting Authority Act.[2]

2. Broadcasting Authority Act (1960) [eds].

Most of you here this evening will be more than familiar with essential law for journalists, one of the most vital elements for anyone training for, or even contemplating, a career in either the writing or broadcasting media. You will appreciate that in the 'live' programming path there are many potential pitfalls under the broad heading of 'libel'. Given the litigious nature of many Irish people and the sometimes more than generous awards made by Irish juries, this is an area of obvious concern for anyone engaged in broadcasting. The spoken word may speed like an arrow, but sometimes it can return with the speed of a rocket – with a libel writ attached. The old newspaper adage 'when in doubt, leave out' applies equally to broadcasting. The necessity for accuracy and certainty is something we must be aware of at all times, whatever the programme. But before 'leaving out' or 'leaving in', programmes are subjected to a fairly rigorous editorial process designed to provide balance without extracting all the teeth from a particular item.

These restraints are essential, particularly in so-called 'investigative journalism'. Campaigning journalism does have its place in broadcasting – but journalistic 'courage' must always be tempered by journalistic 'justice' within the laws of the land, which are there to protect all of us. Despite the editorial overviewing I mentioned, we have had our share of libel and other legal battles over the years. Mistakes do occur, however rigorous the editorial procedures. When we are in the wrong, we say so with alacrity. When we feel we are in the right, we fight. Libel actions, however, are sometimes like playing Russian roulette with all the barrels loaded. The jury system, one feels, is frequently loaded against the large corporation – judgements sometimes seem to be based on the David versus Goliath syndrome, the small man versus the big, bad business giants who can afford to pay over large sums in damages without feeling too much pain. I am not complaining about justice or damages. It is the size of awards which cause concern and, we hope, will be addressed in any review of judicial procedures.

While on legal matters, it may be opportune now to refer to Section 31 – a sub judice situation at the moment for us because of our appeal to the Supreme Court against a High Court's decision in July last[3]. This Ministerial Order as you may know has to be renewed annually – the date is in January – and this has been done by successive Administrations for more than twenty years. Over that period our internal guidelines to interpret the Order have been reviewed from time to time. In the recent High Court decision our interpretation of the Order was judged to be faulty. If the Supreme Court confirm the High Court decision we will naturally have to re-write our internal procedures. At all times, as a Statutory Corporation we must observe the law, most particularly in the case of decisions handed down by the highest court in the land.

Another development is the wide-scale impact of advertising on all our lives particularly the television variety. Advertising as we have come to know it probably had its origins in the 1870s to the 1890s, with an American saying of the time:

> The man who on his trade relies
> Must either bust or advertise

That saying or slogan – 'it pays to advertise' – has permeated literature and even music ever since. Few Irish companies would disagree with that. Advertising on both radio and television is part of the overall broadcasting frame. To some it is intrusive, but most viewers and listeners accept it almost as part of programming. The reality is that Irish broadcasting could not have developed in its present form without advertising, or a totally unrealistic licence fee. The tremendous technological changes we have seen in recent years could *not* have been funded solely from the licence fee, which has not been increased for almost seven years. So revenue from commercials and other enterprises have been essential elements in keeping RTE up with a plethora of broadcasting competitors. The Government imposed 'cap' on advertising is something we have constantly opposed because of its unfairness to RTE and we would sincerely hope it is one area which the current Government review of Broadcasting will address.[4]

3. The current order made under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority prohibits interviews or reports of interviews with spokesmen of any organization 'styling itself' IRA, Sinn Fein, UDA, INLA, and any organization prescribed under the (British) Northern Ireland (Emergency Provision) Act 1976. The order also specifically bans broadcasts made by or on behalf of Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein. RTE has interpreted the Section to mean that any interview on any topic with a member of the organisations listed is prohibited. In March 1993 RTE lost its appeal (to the Supreme Court) against a High Court decision that its blanket ban on broadcasting interviews with members of Sinn Fein was wrong and that Section 31 was being misinterpreted by the station. (eds.)

4. In July 1993, the cap (or restrictions) on RTE's income from advertising was removed by the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Act 1993 [eds].

In more than 30 years, there has been dramatic change in the fabric of Irish society – not always for the better. Critics of societal change lay much of the blame at the door of television. The medium, they argue, which opened our windows on the wider world, also ushered in many of the malign influences which nowadays blight our lives. The portrayal of sex and violence on television, they claim, has led to a lessening of respect for the law and an alarming diminution in regard and appreciation of women and weaker elements in society.

Certainly there has been change – but this has been part of normal evolution. In the arts, in culture, in education, broadcasting has played a significant and positive role which cannot be overlooked. Indeed, the programming 'mix' has included programmes which included violent scenes – but nothing, I suspect, to match the violence so unhappily still with us up the road in Northern Ireland; in the 'ethnic cleansing' in Yugoslavia; in the Gulf War; in Latin America; in South Africa – the list of real time violence, man made and cruel, is part of our everyday lives, not some fictional violence created in a Hollywood studio. RTE has a careful system of evaluation in all programming. There is a pre-screening process which determines what programmes should be transmitted, where they should appear in the schedule in order to protect family values and the younger elements. The portrayal of sex and violence are key elements in this decision making process. But RTE restraints do not and cannot apply to a whole new area the rapidly growing home video market, the development of pan-European broadcasting on satellite and cable with little or no restrictions on the type of quality of programmes they transmit.

For the moment, state broadcasting is holding its own against international consortia with massive financial and other media related resources. The main reason is that national broadcasters reflect national values – in entertainment, in arts and culture, in sport and most emphatically in news and current affairs. Whatever enticements external broadcasters now offer, the national audience remains with the national broadcaster for its interpretation of news and other developments. But round-the-clock European and world news channels, with multi-lingual sound-tracks and 'regional' opt-outs based on national or linguistic territories, could easily change that.

Broadcasting is not an inexpensive activity, despite the massive miniaturization of both transmission and receiver equipment and consequent reduction in costs. Major sports event such as the Olympics, World Cup rugby and soccer are being sold-off to the highest bidders. International news coverage is costly and, for a small company like RTE, frequently prohibitive.

The whole shape of broadcasting is changing before our eyes. Not for the first time, broadcasting is at a cross-roads. It is no time for complacency. Will Rogers, the American humourist, probably said it all: 'Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there'. Broadcasting is not number one on everyone's agenda. But its impact on all our lives is such that we should be aware of where it is going – hopefully along one of those motorways leading from that cross-roads and not in to a long, narrow cul-de-sac. And I hope that those of you here tonight, many of whom will no doubt form the Irish broadcasting bench of tomorrow, share that fundamental concern that I have.

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The Demonization of Women in Popular Culture: Some Recent Examples

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Ciaran McCullagh

Introduction

Until recently the study of popular culture was dominated by the perspective of the Frankfurt School. For them all mass culture was identical. Cultural products were 'cyclically recurrent and rigidly invariable types' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977:352). They were the products of the 'assembly-line character of the culture industry' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977:380). The similarities extended beyond plotlines and genre-types to the consistent promotion of conventional values. This culture was primarily a form of social control. It was, to quote De Tocqueville, 'a tyranny (which) leaves the body free and directs its attack at the soul' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977:358).

However, contemporary analysts do not accept such a narrow and pessimistic view of popular culture. Douglas Kellner (1990), for example, argues that popular culture is best seen as an area of contest between a range of social perspectives. Conformist and traditional views no longer have the field to themselves. Artists and producers have been able to work within the confines of commercial culture to produce material that challenges dominant ideologies.

In the area of gender representation this has meant a greater sensitivity to gender issues and a widening in the range of such perspectives available. Women increasingly are being taken more seriously by film and television. Susanne Moore (Gamman and Marshment, 1990) has talked, for example, about the renegotiation in the portrayal of both male and female bodies in popular culture. Others have discussed how MTV has been forced to include tough women performers, such as Cyndi Lauper, Madonna and Tina Turner, who set out to challenge male ideologies about gender relations (Lewis, 1990). Steven Spielberg's film of *The Colour Purple*, for all its faults, does attempt to deal with the sexual politics, the sexual violence, the issue of female bonding and the lesbian relationship at the heart of Alice Walker's novel (for a discussion see Bobo, 1988). These, in some sense, may be small steps. Writers like Gillian Dyer (1987), for example, argue that they are. But in another sense they are a considerable advance from the time Sam Goldwyn wanted to film Lillian Hellman's stage play, *The Three Sisters*. He was told he could not as a number of the central characters were lesbian. His response: 'No problem, we'll make them Albanians'.

If popular culture is an area of contest, then it is essential to keep one's eye on the players. The purpose of this paper is to document the re-emergence of an old player now apparently getting his second wind in the more welcoming climate of the 1980s and early 1990s. This player had previous successes after the second World War. He won the battle for the shape of popular culture's depiction of women in the 1950s. Under his influence they were either absent altogether or restricted to the domestic sphere. But he was assumed to have been seen off in the more enlightened climate of the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1980s, however, have been a different story. In the United States in particular there has been a concerted attempt to recreate a conservative hegemony, through the 'release' of the corporate sector from the restrictions of government regulation, through the 'rolling back' of an already inadequate welfare state and through the attempt to reinstate so-called traditional values at all levels of the cultural structure (see Kellner,

1990). This latter element has manifested itself in popular culture's representation of women. It has produced a backlash against, what Elizabeth Traube (1991:19) terms, the 'imagined threat of female power'. This time the source of the threat has become more focused and the victim of the backlash has become more specific. The victim has become the single, independent, career-minded woman and the focus of media representations has been on the degree to which 'unlimited ambition' in such women is a source of problems and is 'a threat requiring either their subordination to the appropriate men or their expulsion from the imagined community' (Traube, 1991:2).

The Evidence Assembled

The reality of 'the anti-feminist fight back' (Smith, 1989:30) in popular culture can be documented by considering a number of recent successful films and by a look at two television series, one of which was seen as the flagship of the women's movement into mainstream television, *Cagney and Lacey*. The other is *thirtysomething*. The films are *Presumed Innocent*, *Fatal Attraction*, *Jagged Edge*, *Basic Instinct* and *Cape Fear*.

(i) The Cinema

Let us begin with *Presumed Innocent*. The film is based on the highly successful novel of the same name. Harrison Ford plays the main character, a prosecuting lawyer in a large American city. His boss is up for re-election when a colleague of Ford's, a woman, is found raped and murdered. At her funeral she is described as a very good lawyer. Although Ford had an affair with the murdered woman in the past he is chosen to investigate the crime. He later ends up being charged with it. As the film unfolds we find out that almost everyone, from the prosecuting attorney to the cop on the street, is corrupt. The judge hearing the case, for example, was involved in a bribery scandal with the murdered woman and also had an affair with her. The case against Ford collapses when his defending counsel indicates to the judge that he will introduce evidence about both of these matters.

Ford returns home and finds evidence that his wife is the murderer. By the nature of his profession, he is under a legal obligation to report offences and offenders to the police. But instead in this case he does nothing. He simply separates from his wife, at her insistence and not his. His best friend, depicted in the film as an honest and reliable police investigator and under the same legal imperatives as Ford, approaches him. He says that he withheld evidence from the court that could have had damaging consequences for Ford. He gives it to him and Ford throws it off the ferry on which they have been meeting. On that note the film ends.

But ask yourself, why does all of this happen, why do good men go bad, why do they get involved in legal evasions and in corruption? Joan Smith (1989) argues that what you find at the centre of the story producing all the mayhem and disorder is an attractive, glamourous, single and successful career woman. She is presented as hungry for power and ambitious for promotion. Her means of achieving these is to exchange them for sexual favours. She has slept with nearly every man in the story. It is these sexual couplings that provoke and deepen the corruption in which the men subsequently get involved. The real theme of the film, Smith argues (1989:34), is that 'women's power is always achieved illegitimately and at the expense of men'. But such power and success has a price. 'Female intrusion into public life — into male areas of life — inevitably brings with it the risk that violence will ensue'. It is in this respect that the moral resolution in the film is significant. The format of the film is that of a conventional crime story. So we expect that in the end justice will be done and the killer punished. Yet in this film the unexpected seems to happen. The apparent culprit, Ford's wife, is not punished. The reason is simple. She is presented as not really being at fault. She has been the victim of the other woman's ambitions. The real culprit and the cause of all

the trouble is the dead woman. Her crime is to interfere in the world of men and her punishment is to be killed.

The same theme of the demolition of the independent, single woman is at the centre of *Jagged Edge*. It opens with the horrific murder of a woman. A newspaper editor, played by Jeff Bridges, is charged with the crime. The victim, it turns out, is his wife. We are then introduced to a professional and highly regarded corporate lawyer who is also a woman. After some hesitation, she agrees to defend him. When we meet her first she is dressed in a business-like fashion and she is established as being good at her job. However once established in this way the film then proceeds to systematically undermine her. Her professional judgement is the first thing to go. Her male colleagues know, from their experience of the criminal world, that Bridges is guilty. By contrast she chooses to defend him not because she knows he is innocent but because she feels he must be.

Her reputation slips from there on. Within a short period she is in bed with Bridges, somewhat unprofessional conduct even for a lawyer. She is also shown as a bad mother, too caught up with her lover's defence to help her children with their school work. But the full extent of her underlying stupidity is not revealed until the end. She gets Bridges off on the murder charge. She spends the night with him, though it is not clear if this is in lieu of a fee or not. Next morning she discovers evidence that proves he did commit the crime. The men were right all along. A woman's feelings had yet again betrayed her.

In this situation the obvious response would be to contact the police. Instead she rushes home and has a shower. Bridges rings her. Rather than stalling him she indicates that she has found the evidence against him. At this point a call to the police would definitely have been appropriate. Instead she goes to bed and with her hair wet too. Sure enough he comes along to kill her but she produces a gun and kills him. She then falls into another man's arms for the traditional concluding cuddle. It is, after all, tough when you meddle in a man's world.

And then there is *Fatal Attraction*, or as Julie Burchill (1992) refers to it, 'Foetal Attraction'. Here, a cool, efficient, professional women has a one-night stand with the male character, played by Michael Douglas. The experience is undermining. She cannot live with Douglas' rejection of her and comes after him and his family. The contrast between the real woman, Michael Douglas's wife, played by Anne Archer and the dangerously unstable career woman, played by Glenn Close, is highlighted throughout the film. Consider, for example, the backgrounds against which the two women are filmed. His wife is backlit by warm fires and cosy domestic colours. The other woman lives in a converted warehouse in the meat market area of New York. The predominant colours and texture are grey and steely. Neighbourhood lighting consists of fires in oil drums, a visual hint of a witch's cauldron. The contrast is also dramatized by the names they are given. The 'real' woman is called 'Beth', the warmer and more user-friendly diminutive of formal and slightly distant 'Elizabeth'. The 'unstable' woman by contrast is given a name, Alex, that is cold and that does not even immediately identify her as a woman.

However the real undermining is at the climax of the film. Here the earlier visual hint of the connection between the professional woman and a witch is made explicit. The test for a witch was immersion in water. If you stayed down you were not a witch. You drowned but at least you went to heaven. If you came up out of the water you were a witch and they burned you. This process solved the problem for society but its benefits to accused women were less apparent. At the end of the film Douglas drowns Glenn Close in the bath and, satisfied with a job well done, turns his back on her. She rises up out of the water with a knife to kill him. She is stopped by Douglas's wife who shoots her dead. The film finishes with a soft focus shot of a photograph of the family, now restored to its oneness. In the end the point in *Fatal Attraction* is, as Susan Faludi (1992:152) puts it, 'the best single woman is a dead one'.

What is interesting is that the producers of this film intended it to have a feminist message. If so they went about making it in a most peculiar way. The director they chose was Adrian Lynne, one of whose previous claims to directorial elegance was the film *9½ Weeks*. This was based on a book of the same name which is a fictionalized account of a woman's decline into sadomasochism. In the book and in the film script, the story ends with the woman walking away from the relationship and seeking help. Lynne, according to Susan Faludi (1992:148), 'tried to change the ending so that she winds up learning to love the abuse'. It took a protest by women working on the film to prevent this. The casting of Michael Douglas in a film that was presumed to have a feminist message was also, to put it at its most discrete, unusual. He is on record as saying that he was irritated by feminism. 'If you want to know', he told a reporter, ' I'm really tired of feminists, sick of them....Guys are going through a terrible crisis right now because of women's unreasonable demands' (quoted in Faludi, 1992:151).

However, the group blamed for the purging of the original feminist message was the audience on whom the film was pre-tested. They did not like the original ending so it was changed at a cost of $1.3 million. But what was so feminist about the original ending? In it the same sequence of events unfolds but instead of Glenn Close being killed she commits suicide. It takes considerable skill and expertise to construe this ending as a feminist message. That single independent women should be presented as resolving difficult situations in their lives by killing themselves is hardly a positive endorsement of their lifestyle.

Michael Douglas, perhaps not surprisingly, also features in another recent film *Basic Instinct* which among its other problems reintroduces into mainstream popular culture the idea of the 'permissible' rape. A key scene in the film is an encounter in a bar where Douglas is taunted by another white male police officer. He leaves and goes back to her apartment with a woman psychiatrist who is shown earlier in the film to be calm, professional and single. Here despite the fact that she clearly says 'no', she is brutally raped. She is later shown as colluding in it when the two are seen in bed calmly discussing the murder he is investigating. The rape is also retrospectively justified by the fact that she turns out to be the killer or at least she may have been. The 'invisibility' of the rape is neatly illustrated in *Sight and Sound*, a film review magazine, where, in describing the plot of the film, it says that Douglas 'sleeps with the police psychologist assigned to be his therapist' (Hoberman, 1992:4).

The final film is *Cape Fear* which is, as Pam Cook (1992: 15) says, 'a violent rape film in which women apparently collude in their own punishment at the hands of a rapist'. The female characters seem to attract and almost welcome their own humiliation. This is particularly the case where Lori Davis, a mistress of the lawyer that Cady comes back to avenge himself against, is raped but where the rape begins as seduction. She acts the role of promiscuous woman and she is presented as 'asking for it'. She gets it in the end but not in the form that she anticipated. The implication for women is that they are open to seduction by potential rapists and so are contributors to their own humiliation. They are in effect the cause of their own victimization. This film was released in a year in which two major rape trials were going on in the United States and in which the defence case was that the alleged victims encouraged the subsequent sexual assault.

It is interesting in this respect to compare the recent version of *Cape Fear* with the original 1961 version. There are a number of differences, for example, in the portrayal of the Bowden family. The earlier version had them as the ideal united family and as fighting the threat from outside represented by Cady. The later version has the family in a mess. The wife is bitter, disaffected and not supportive of her husband. The husband is having an affair. The daughter, it is suggested, is recovering from a drug problem. She responds to the atmosphere in the household by retreating to her bedroom with MTV, her radio and her Swatch telephone. But, for our present purposes, the most significant change is in the portrayal of Cady's violence against women. The earlier version presents it as unmitigated and unquestioned evil. There is simply no room for doubt about the violence that he inflicts on his victims and there is no indication of any collusion on the

part of his victims.

(ii) Television

The issue of the change in the representation of women in popular culture is not restricted to the cinema. Most of the fictional material on the television comes from the United States. It is very much in the nature of the television industry there that it originates very little new material itself. The pressure to capture audience share is simply too great for any chances to be taken. The strategy of producers is to look to what has already been successful, either on other television channels, as books or in the cinema, and recycle it. It is thus not surprising that they rapidly began to incorporate this new image of women into the material they produced. The two most striking examples of this are *Cagney and Lacey* and *thirtysomething*.

Cagney and Lacey is generally seen as significant in the history of gender representation in popular culture. The programme was unique in a number of respects. It was 'the first dramatic narrative programme in television history to star two women' (D'Acci, 1987:204). It challenged gender roles and the conventions of the 'buddy' movie genre by casting two women as tough professional cops. Cagney was shown as having an active sex life which at that time was unusual for a single woman on network television. Lacey was shown as the main income-earner in her household. When her husband was unemployed he was shown minding the children and cooking the meals. Representatives of the women's movement in the US actively promoted the early episodes of the show. Gloria Steinem, for example, appeared on talk shows to promote it and was scheduled to play a small part in one episode of the programme. A key part of its target audience was clearly female. This can be seen in the range of topics dealt with in the programme such as rape, sexual discrimination in the work place and child abuse, and in the strategies that were used to disturb male viewers like the mocking of the machismo of the male characters.

Thus, it is an important programme for the study of gender representations in the media and the development of the programme is of particular interest for the concerns being discussed here. Initially there was a balance in the representations of the lives of the two women and much of the dramatic tension derived from the contrast between the two. But as the programme proceeded there was a change in the portrayal of the characters and the lifestyles that they represented. It came increasingly to favour the traditional family of Lacey and her husband, Harvey, as the more acceptable and satisfactory norm for women. This can be seen most clearly in the disintegration and eventual destruction of Christine Cagney. The message again is that the single life, and the desire of single women to participate as equals in a man's world, is a dangerous one for women. In this case the danger is posed by alcoholism.

Alcock and Robson (1990) have developed this argument by looking at a number of episodes of the penultimate series. In one episode they show how Cagney is established as a strong independent character who both desires and is desirable to men. This happens when a gun-collector visits the police station to report the theft of one of his guns. The gun-collector flirts with her, tells her that firing an automatic weapon 'is pretty exciting stuff'. Another female cop says 'I like a man that's heavily armed'. She is put in charge of the gun-check in the precinct. Most of the men are careless with the rules about guns, the symbol of their power, and they resent her attempts to make them aware of this. Lacey, by contrast, is mindful of guns and of her body. She wears a bulletproof vest as the rules stipulate. Cagney does not. She sees it as indicating vulnerability – the men don't so why should she? – and as undermining her sexuality.

Her father tells her that she looks pregnant in it.

When they go after the gun thief Lacey is shot. Cagney feels guilty about this for two reasons. Firstly, the gun used is one stolen from the gun collector with whom she had been flirting. Secondly, she realizes if she had been shot, she would be dead. Lacey is wounded but alive because she followed the rules, accepted her vulnerability as a woman and wore her bulletproof vest. Cagney is unable to deal with this. She is unwilling to acknowledge her vulnerability and responds by turning to drink and the process of her disintegration begins.

It continues in later episodes when Lacey rescues a baby from a burning car. She is praised for it by her male colleagues and her family. As her reputation rises, Cagney by contrast is on the way down helped in no small measure by the pressures of her father Charlie, whom she is unwilling to acknowledge is an alcoholic. He dies, hitting his head in a drunken fall. She refuses to accept that this happened because he was drunk. Her inability to deal with the domestic is developed in scenes about the funeral. Her brother flies in from California. His view of family life differs from hers. He defends the mother, she the drunken father. She has a difficulty with mothers. Lacey's rescue of the child leads to Cagney calling her, in a sarcastic vein, 'mother of the decade'. The search for the real mother of the child leads to several false ones coming forward. This makes Cagney angry at all 'these mothers' and their need for children. She is shown as uneasy among families. She abruptly leaves each of the homes she stays in after her father's death – Lacey's which she leaves in the middle of the night and her brother's in California.

Lacey gets promoted for rescuing the child while Cagney continues to drink heavily. She misses her partner's promotion party because she is drunk. It is Lacey in her mothering role who eventually sorts out the mess of her life. Cagney's problem, Alcock and Robson (1990) argue, is presented as the failure to acknowledge her vulnerability as a woman in a man's world, her failure to appreciate the role of the family and her failure to acknowledge the comforts and necessity of domesticity. These failures lead to alcoholism. The solution is for her to acknowledge them. What she has to be helped to do is to recognize her vulnerability as a single woman. This is what Lacey eventually does for her. As Alcock and Robson (1990:52) tell us, 'it is within the confines of the Lacey universe that Cagney realizes she must reside; no more breaking the rules... As such, Mary Beth is the agent of patriarchy who drags Christine back to the straight and narrow'. This solution requires her demise as a single, independent woman.

Once the character of Cagney was broken in this way, the dramatic tension on which the series depended was dissolved. The programme survived another season on network television in the United States. The ultimate indignity was in the last episode. Cagney and Lacey are shown under siege in a farmhouse. Their lives are in danger. They need help. It comes in the form of car loads of men, restoring the 'natural' order of television which says that women must always be rescued by men.

The centrality of the domestic to the lives and to the self-realization of women is taken further in *thirtysomething*. This was released on network television in the United States in 1987. It was promoted as a realistic drama and as 'thinking' people's television (Faludi,1992:194-202). The American Psychological Association encouraged this perception by giving the show an award for promoting 'inner thinking'. More cynical commentators explained this by saying that viewers were more likely to try therapy after watching the programme.

The characters of the women range from the blissfully happy to the spectacularly unhappy, a range which finds at the happy end the woman who gives up her career to

raise her children and at the unhappy end a single career woman. The happy domesticated woman is given the name 'Hope'. The ambitious single woman, by contrast, is called Ellyn. She is shown as an irritable, stressed, unloved and unlovable person. She lives in an apartment that makes that of Alex in *Fatal Attraction* seem positively homely. Her stomach is in a dreadful state, she has bags under her eyes from working late and she is allergic to small babies. The producers of the show considered making her a drug addict or giving her a nervous breakdown but they felt this was too drastic. They compromised by giving her a bleeding ulcer. Her boyfriend leaves her because he says that she is self-destructive. She ends up back in her parent's house in her old bedroom with her teddy-bears and cuddly toys. The effect of domesticity is immediate. She realizes the error of her ways, reaches for the phone and rings a psychiatrist, a male one of course.

Susan Faludi (1992:197) argues that a key episode in the series was one called 'Weaning'. In this, Hope returns to her old job on a part-time basis because, unusually for television characters, the family are having money troubles. She finds the job exhausting. Her husband's response to her tiredness is revealing. He says 'We used to be madly in love'. She says, 'it won't always be like this' and he responds 'yeah, it will probably be worse'. Being madly in love and having a full-time job is not a problem for a man. Being in love and keeping down a part-time job is, however, beyond the wit of a woman.

In the job she comes across a career-minded woman. She asks the woman if she wants children. The woman says that she does not have time for a relationship at the moment. This remark could have created the dramatic space within which the issue of the obstacles to the career advancement of women could have been dramatized. It is not taken. Instead Hope leaves her work and rushes home to her husband. She tells him that she cannot manage the two jobs, again creating dramatic space for a discussion of the burden of the 'double-day' faced by working women. Instead he says that he knows it is not politically correct but he would prefer her at home also. The episode ends with Van Morrison singing 'She's an angel' as Hope dances around the nursery with the child in her arms.

Concluding Discussion

The argument of this paper has been that the last few years have seen a new and significant trend in the depiction of women in popular culture. This is the representation of the domestic as the most suitable for women and the portrayal of ambition and independence in single professional women as a danger to society and to the women themselves. It is not being suggested that this is the only image of women available in popular culture but the trend documented here has, nonetheless, become a prominent one. Its significance is that it calls into question any presumption that the misogyny behind these depictions of women has become a thing of the past. It continues to be a potent factor in popular culture. The scale of the problem can be illustrated by looking at the film that was presented as having the most positive feminist message in the late 1980s. This was *The Accused*. That a film which suggests that rape is a crime of violence, that rape victims deserve sympathy and that women have the right not to be raped should be seen as a 'daring feminist statement' is, as Susan Faludi (1992:170) says, a depressing indication of 'how much ground women have already lost'.

Two final issues remain to be addressed. The first is that all of the films and television shows examined in this article are American and reflect American (male) cultural and sexual preoccupations. So it could be objected that the analysis here has little relevance to Ireland. Yet we must take account of the fact that all of them have

been very successful in Ireland. All of the films, for example, did well in the cinema here. Two of them – *Basic Instinct* and *Cape Fear* – were the most popular video rentals from Extravision in 1992. Against this kind of background we do need to consider whether there are sufficient strong, well produced, well presented and well marketed countervailing images of women in popular culture in Ireland to counteract the effects of imported representations.

The second issue is the matter of audiences. We have suggested here that certain films and television shows carry a particular image of the single woman and of the ideal life-style for women in general. Yet, much recent audience research suggests that the images and interpretations that producers and directors incorporate into their work are not necessarily those which audiences take (for a discussion, see Kelly, 1991). It is, according to this research, no longer possible to assume that the dominant meaning in media products is accepted by the audience. The audience, it is claimed, is capable of 'resisting' the meaning in the text. This raises the question of whether the films and programmes analyzed here are seen and understood by audiences in the critical way in which this article has suggested that they should be or whether they are understood in the way their makers intended. To put it simply, can we assume that audiences see the deep misogyny that permeates these films and shows?

There are a number of reasons to argue that they do not. One is that while it is the case, as Fiske (1987) has suggested, that programmes like the news do not have a narrative structure which is powerful enough to shape our understanding of the issues, the same is not true of films in particular. Here the narrative structure is stronger, more unified, more coherent and less open to the fragmentation to which other forms of media are susceptible. Hence films are likely to be more influential on audience attitudes and understandings than are television programmes like the news. It is also true, as Condit (1989:112) has argued, that 'audiences do not have the resources on which resistive practices depend'. These include the time and energy to construct alternative interpretations. If these require a lot of work then 'the tendency of such burdens is', as Condit (1989:109) puts it, 'to silence viewers'.

Moreover, viewers' ability to offer opposed readings depends to a considerable extent on the degree of access they have to sources of oppositional interpretations. As a result, examples of successful oppositional decoding are more limited than is often suggested. They tend to be confined to audiences that are relatively advantaged in relation to the content of the media message. Thus, in Morley's (1980) research the shop stewards with their links to the trade union movement could produce alternative interpretations of the *Nationwide* programme a lot easier than the shop-floor workers. Finally, viewers' abilities to produce alternative interpretations is constrained by cultural practices in relation to viewing. Constructing an alternative reading generally requires a number of viewings of a film or television programme. Academics may do this but most viewers do not. From their point of view once the ending of a film is known there is little to be gained from looking at it a second time.

All of this means that the issues of the content and the power of popular culture are still highly relevant topics. The power of television and film lies in its ability to 'make present in public' (Condit, 1989:113) particular accounts and interpretations of events, issues and people in society. Even if these are not accepted by audiences their presence gives them status, importance and validity. Hence the way in which television and film address issues like that of gender continues to be important. It legitimates particular points of view simply by giving 'presence to their codes' (Condit,1989:114). This means that if such misogynistic presentations of women continue to have such a central place in our culture it should be a matter of concern to us.

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Denis McQuail *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*

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With the recent rise to prominence of the discourse of performance measurement in higher education and other organizations, (with its related jargon of performance indicators, quality assessment, total quality management etc.) it is perhaps timely to find a senior scholar in mass communication apply the paradigm of performance assessment to the media systems of Western societies which share similar traditions of liberal democracy (mostly Britain and the US, but with some attention also to Canada, Sweden, France, Germany, Netherlands and the EC). McQuail's aim is to develop as comprehensive a framework of normative principles as possible, including performance criteria and indicators, consistent with historical liberal democratic concern with public communication and the public interest in the working of the mass media. Not an easy task, in a field where critics and media advocates have advanced a bewildering array of aims which public communication, in its multi-faceted forms, should be supporting and values with which criteria for measuring success or failure might be constructed.

The four major themes of public interest which organize the book and form the schema into which its vast review of published research is fitted, focus on the notion of the freedom and independence of the media (three chapters), their diversity (three chapters), the question of objectivity (four chapters) and the media contribution to the social and cultural order (three chapters). 'Public Communication' is taken to refer to that intrinsic web of informational, expressive and solidaristic transactions which take place in the public space of societies where attention is paid to matters of general public concern, though in general, McQuail's interest is in the newspaper press and broadcast journalism, rather than in the other cultural industries or in fictional genres. Before these four organizing themes are tackled frontally, however, the first one hundred pages, almost one third of the total, are used to disentangle the various meanings accruing historically to such key terms as 'public interest', to sift through the evolution of media policy discourse in order to identify major performance norms and to discuss the variety of research models and methods which could be brought to bear on 'performance research'. McQuail is at his most thorough here, pinning down the meanings he wants, exploring the origins of 'public' concerns, feeling for the contours and outer limits of policy discourse focused on newspapers and broadcasting, in North America and Western Europe. This discourse is grounded mainly in constitutional tradition and interpretation, legal frameworks, government regulation and professional codes.

In building his project on this particular kind of 'public' debate that has taken place for two centuries or more, McQuail adopts quite a conservative approach, though consciously so. Obviously, the argument can be made, that this policy discourse has been deeply class-biassed from the very beginning, representing certain interests and not others. There is also a need to highlight the question of whether one can discuss how the media should be organised and how they should perform, in isolation from asking how society (in whose 'public sphere' the media operate) is organized politically or economically. McQuail sees no problem in divorcing questions of media performance from questions of how society itself is structured and explicitly refrains from advancing any new normative theory or advocating the special claim of any particular set of values (p.66). There is an admirable scholarly thoroughness in his goal of representing fairly the main evaluative ideas 'actually encountered in public debate and in regulations concerning media performance', but his project will provide little excitement for those looking for a radical critique of how that debate was constructed and the 'core values' (freedom, equality, order) which he claims it yields in a fairly unproblematic way. McQuail's scholarship is too sophisticated, of course, not to acknowledge points of view

labelled 'Marxist' or 'critical' or 'progressive' and he is unstintingly fair in his references to intellectual/political traditions even when it is clear from his allocation of space and emphasis that his affections lie elsewhere.

The remaining two themes of the book draw together a wide range of research which centres on content analysis of just about every kind (newspapers and television) but insists on the relevance of structures of ownership, management and organizational environment in understanding media content. The meticulous sifting of published research, rather than the generation of new research focused on the concerns in hand, means that many of the conclusions have a cautious quality about them, either because of the framing of the original research question (over which McQuail, of course, had no influence) or the method used to answer it. Thus, for example, we find no 'clear general effects' from monopoly ownership and control of newspapers 'on the balance of costs and benefits in performance terms'. More generally, the chapter examining links between structure and performance finds that 'it is very difficult to demonstrate any conclusive link between the two', a view hardly persuasive to those in the critical tradition of performance research inspired, for example, by Herbert Schiller's *Mass Media and American Empire*, (the only Schiller book mentioned in twenty-eight pages of references) But even in cases where McQuail has access to published research which roundly condemns the media for an abysmal failure to live up to anything like the standards of 'public interest' laid out in the early chapters, his tendency is to eschew passion, anger or condemnation and slip into the role of apologist, finding, for example, the process linking newspaper structure and performance 'complex and influenced by more variables than can be taken adequately into account' (p.125).

The Gulf War of 1991 is a case in point, where the underlying base of published research clearly condemns Western media for shattering any performance criteria that might be derived from the emphasis of the liberal democratic tradition on public interest. McQuail, however, rather than referring back to his own elucidation of 'public communication' and 'public space', excuses the media in a variety of ways (p.132). Likewise, the discussion of 'media structure and class structure' (Ch. 12) is at a level of such generality as to be quite unhelpful in evaluating the long-standing. Marxist argument that most Western media systems, because of their class character, are intrinsically incapable of genuinely serving all sectors in society. Surely it would be imperative in this context, if there are nine out of nineteen national newspapers directed to middle class readers in Britain (p. 162) to investigate the quality of the information sold to 'non-middle class' readers. McQuail's review of research on media 'distortion' of the diversity of human activity, leads not to condemnation but to an argument that the media 'have to construct their own media reality, for their own purposes and those of their clients and their audiences' and that 'it would be unrealistic and unreasonable to expect a faithful reproduction of some 'pure reality'. We should recognize 'the autonomy of media accounts and the validity of alternative definitions of reality' (p. 169).

The sections on Objectivity and the 'Maintenance Of Social Order' (almost a third of the book) display the same McQuail attention to thorough survey of published research, though not enough treatment (in this reviewer's opinion) is given to critical research in particular the notion of objectivity in news practice as inescapably ideological, resting on an assumed consensus about the legitimacy of the established order. Here, as elsewhere, McQuail is encyclopedic in his reach and in his presentation cool, restrained, careful, uncontroversial. This dispassionate evenhandedness can bring its own distortions however, as when the 'systematic measurement' of sensationalism (reported in the American journal *Journalism Quarterly*) gets the same space and emphasis as the much richer British interest in investigating how 'preferred readings' are privileged in the structuring of news. A final section looks at cultural policies and performance criteria, including problems of cultural identity in a transnationalized media system, and ends with an interesting reflection on evaluating the public interest while looking ahead to an information age which will be characterized by convergence between modes of communication, fragmentation of media production and distribution, and

multiplication of information outlets. McQuail's view of the future is cautiously optimistic; 'an information society, in a shrinking world, can be a more informed society and a more creative, politically active, more culturally diverse society' (p. 310). This is not out of sync with his general conclusion, which will strike some readers as rather bland, that 'the media do not emerge too badly from the assessment process.. (they are) more fair and informative and less mean spirited and socially insensitive than their more severe critics have alleged' (pp. 301-302). In fairness, it has to be added that the 'severe critics' have been referred to (some of them), although they have not been given much prominence in the structure of the book.

Who will benefit from this book? Its strength is its encyclopedic casting of a net into a wide sea of research (like the authors earlier *Mass Communication Theory*) but this is also its weakness. It is unlikely to be read cover to cover, as it lacks a central argument and ends with the rather mundane conclusion that there is a large and 'probably unbridgeable' gap between norms and expectations concerning public benefit from the media and the realities of actual media performance. Those looking for a trajectory from the careful theorizing about public interest at the beginning of the book, to firm guidelines about media performance assessment at the end, will be disappointed. Yet it will be a useful book to dip into, guiding the student back to its generous reference list for further enlightenment. As a text, it will need contextualizing in the lecture hall, both for its lack of emphasis on the critical view of performance and for its compression of some research traditions that might be more insightful and more motivating if teased out.

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James Donald, *Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty*

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Sheelagh Drudy

In a chapter entitled 'What's at Stake in Vampire Films?' (in which he presents an analysis of the transgressive and creative aspects of popular culture) James Donald begins by quoting Wittgenstein:

> A typical American film, naïve and silly, can - for all its silliness and even by means of it - be instructive. A fatuous, self-conscious English film can teach one nothing. I have often learnt a lesson from a silly American film.

This is not a silly book It is a very serious book. But this reviewer has, nonetheless, learnt a lesson from it. The lesson learnt is that one always has to make an extra effort to be entirely fair to a book with whose theoretical approach one is in some (though not complete) disagreement. We shall return to this anon.

The author's essential project is to arrive at a form of resolution of the opposition, in education, between emancipation and control. To do this he initially takes us through a Foucauldian analysis of the relationship between the Enlightenment and education, and the growth of state control in education from the mid-nineteenth century up to the present. He draws, in particular, on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (1980) to describe the 'hidden curriculum': the principles governing the organization of schooling and its form of discipline and pedagogy.

In the course of Donald's analysis there are some engaging juxtapositions. For example, he draws the title of his book from Flaubert's (1869) novel of the same name,

with its moral ambiguities and its idealization of the unattainable. This provides an ironic backdrop to a succinct account (in Chapter 6) of Mrs. Thatcher's attempts to educate public sentiment through the Education Reform Act 1988 and the White Paper *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality* (1988). Indeed, from this account it would appear that many educationalists may have underestimated Mrs. Thatcher. 'Economics is the method', she is quoted as saying. 'The aim is to change the soul'. The question is thereby raised - did her era change the soul as well as the structures and the curriculum?

A major focus in the book is an exploration of the relationship between education and democracy. Education, Donald argues, should not be about the engineering of human souls. He examines the work of a number of thinkers in order to sketch some of the principles which might allow education to create a 'radically democratic public sphere'.

Among the theories explored are Michael Walzer's attempt (Spheres of Justice, 1983) to formulate a theory of distributive justice compatible with a society both heterogeneous and egalitarian. He draws from this, and from Amy Guttman's *Democratic Education* (1987), the principle that justice involves a sensitivity and a responsibility to otherness. He draws from the work of E. D. Hirsch (*Cultural Literacy*, 1987) a) the principle of the need to break the cultural and educational cycle which condemns disadvantaged children to remain poor and illiterate; and b) the need to make everyone literate on the same terms, to have access to the power embodied in the national culture.

In the face of these quite admirable principles, what is the problem? The problem, in this reviewer's opinion, is the far too light dismissal of an emancipatory approach to education, such as is embodied particularly in the work of Raymond Williams (e.g. *The Long Revolution*, 1965), and of Dewey (e.g. *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927). The author is also somewhat selective in his representation of this perspective neglecting, as he does, the work of Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux in the United States (*Education Under Siege*, 1985; *Post-Modern Education*, 1991) as well as that of Paolo Freire in Latin America (*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1975).

To suggest that the concept of 'education as emancipation' may have something to offer is not to ignore the structural constraints to this. One is all too cognoscent of the history of education in reproduction, control and oppression, and of counter-resistance to pressures for resistance and change. However, rather than dismiss the potential in education for liberation and change, I would argue the possibility of the realization of its potential in what Donald himself calls the 'agonistic dialogue' (p.170) or what Edward Saïd once described as 'working in the cracks'.

I would have a further problem with the author's apparently unquestioning acceptance of concepts such as 'educability' in Guttman's work (which implies that certain children are ineducable and therefore may be excluded from the educational system). Although he is critical of Hirsch, he seems to ignore the strong thread of cultural deficit theory apparent in Hirsch's work e.g. 'Although everyone is literate in some local, regional, or ethnic culture, the connection between mainstream culture and the national written language justifies calling mainstream culture the basic culture of the nation' (Hirsch, quoted on p.53) This is a very problematic notion as it ignores inequalities of power. To see how very problematic it is one only has to look across the Border, or at the nightly news bulletins from Bosnia.

However, it has to be said that this book has some very considerable strengths, the chief of which is that it poses some awkward questions. He challenges populist conservatism, the 'progressive orthodoxies of emancipation and self-realization' and the 'cynicism of aimless reformism'. It is unquestionably good for the soul to be challenged. He poses some pleasing little conundrums for the well-intentioned educator - such as the one on teaching independence of mind:

> If I as your teacher tell you to think for yourself, you are caught in an impossible position. Think for yourself, and you are still thinking as I tell you, in my terms. Think not as I tell you, and you must decide not to think for yourself (p.143).

He also offers a possible alternative to the emergent Irish polarity between a 'liberal' and a 'vocational' education. His alternative is the concept of a 'critical vocationalism'. A critical vocationalism 'would begin by asking what concepts, knowledges and intellectual skills would be necessary for understanding how industries and economies work, in order to develop the potential for autonomy in the shaping of a career'. In this context, he argues, a general education would have to teach some understanding of the complex technological, economic and industrial systems that structure the organization of production and the exercise of power in modern Western societies.

> Any vocationalism that was not critical - that taught only mechanical skills and deference, that ignored the determinants and consequences of decisions and practices, and that did not require students to think about them - would be inefficient and inappropriate. Vocationalism would then no longer refer just to the provision of job-specific apprenticeships or 'relevant' courses for low academic achievers. It would have to address as a priority the potential role of educational institutions in creating a skilled, informed and participatory workforce as a precondition for industrial democracy as well as economic effectiveness (p.163).

Donald's concept of critical vocationalism may not provide the resolution of the debates between the advocates of liberal and vocational education, but it could certainly be used as an argument for providing social and political education as a central part of the curriculum in our schools and colleges.

Sentimental Education, then, provides very few answers but it does raise a number of very intriguing questions. It also emphasises the importance of heeding different, marginal, abnormal and transgressive voices. It calls for the sustained critique of regimes of truth, the patient and practical reform of existing institutions and a political imagination. Surely this is a legitimate project for an emancipatory education?

Pat Dunne, RTE Radio Producer and Lecturer in Department of Cummunications, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Robert Chapman *Selling The Sixties: The Pirates and Pop Music Radio*

London: Routledge, 1992. stg£11.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 079705

Pat Dunne

Between 1964 and 1968 over twenty unlicensed radio stations, operating on medium wave, flourished on offshore sites around the coast of Great Britain. By the time they were closed down by Government legislation, BBC radio had been restructured to accommodate a new pop channel and the way had been paved for the introduction of legal commercial broadcasting.

The offshore 'pirates' have become part of the mythology of 1960s pop culture, be it as swashbuckling innovators, 'free radio' philanthropists or purveyors of 'progressive' music. In *Selling the Sixties*, Robert Chapman takes off the rose-tinted granny glasses to examine the motivations of those who got involved in illegal broadcasting and to assess their achievements. He tells their story, warts and all, mainly by comparing the contrasting origins and styles of the two most successful pirates – Caroline and London.

He sets them off against each other as a paradigm of the idealism versus big business debate that permeated pop culture in the mid to late 1960s.

Ronan O'Rahilly, the Irishman who launched Radio Caroline represents the trendy, eccentric even naive type of entrepreneur whose chic radicalism helped to create 'swinging London.

> ... I remember being in Caroline House and Ronan telling me about how all the other stations were going to close down and he made it very clear to me. He said listen, they're only in it for the money. We are in it for a principle. We are in it for an ideal. We are in it for a philosophy'!

This was Ronan, his libertarian values still intact,talking to his programmes director, Tom Lodge, shortly before the deadline for closure set by the GPO.

There were two Carolines in fact: Caroline South beaming into London and Caroline North, anchored off the Isle of Man, which picked up a substantial Irish listenership. The management of the stations was fairly chaotic and Caroline South's weaknesses in programming and signal quality were exposed when Radio London went on the air.

Radio London ['Big L'] was backed by multi-national finance; the investors money was protected by watertight structures; its accountancy procedures were impeccable and every effort was made to win respectability for the station. As Chapman puts it: 'In theory Radio London was a pirate radio station. In all other respects it was a major business concern which just happened as a matter of legislative convenience [or inconvenience] to be operating from a ship'.

In the end, it was Radio London that provided the BBC with its model for pop music radio and indeed with the majority of Radio One's disc jockeys. Caroline continued its buccaneering after the Government's deadline until financial difficulties eventually forced it off the air but Chapman misses the opportunity to trace Caroline's legacy back to Ireland where, in the early 1980s, two super-pirates emerged – Nova and Sunshine – both of them set up by ex-Caroline DJs.

While the Caroline/London story is the core of *Selling the Sixties*. Chapman chronicles the rise and fall of the other British pirates of the time, most of them based on abandoned naval forts in the Thames estuary. He also provides a wry and sometimes hilarious insight into the BBC's ethos in the period when pop music was almost an anthropological phenomenon to be kept at arm's length or to be aired on programmes featuring 'a couple of discs' in between the resident variety orchestra sambas and show tunes. Radio One's post-pirate programming is inspected in detail and one feels that overall the author is more in his element when discussing the ingredients of programme-making and the history of music radio than he is with some of the heavier analytical matter promised in the introduction but never quite delivered.

For example, he suggests that a people's history sub-text runs, constantly but unobtrusively, throughout *Selling the Sixties* but it is so unobtrusive we hear no more about it. Even though there are bound to be major lacunae in the documentation available on clandestine broadcasting, there are tantalizing excerpts here from financial statements, files, memos, audience research information etc., but no appendices or reports in full, nothing that has not been pre-digested. There are a few playlists and commercial logs included but with over 10,000 hours of recorded material in his possession one wishes he had provided more data of this kind. Finally, there are some important issues raised which are neither resolved nor fully debated. '...what did the programming initiatives of the offshore stations ultimately achieve?', he asks. His reply:

> there seem to be three overlapping schools of thought among broadcasters involved with the venture. One school suggests that the pirates proved the demand for legal commercial radio in the U.K.

> Questioning whether this was the desire of the listeners or merely the need of the advertisers, another school of thought offers the variant that listeners didn't so much want commercial radio per se: what they wanted was format radio... A third school of thought suggests an even simpler conclusion: listeners just wanted non-stop music on tap.

Mmm...

According to the publishers *Selling the Sixties* will appeal 'not only to students of communications, mass media and cultural studies but to all those with an enthusiasm for radio history, pop and the sixties'. But there may not be enough meat for the academic to chew on, and not enough spice to whet the 'anorak's' appetite. If you are in both camps though you will find *Selling the Sixties* nourishing enough.

Brian Farrell, Professor of Politics, University College Dublin and Broadcaster.

Bob Franklin, ed. *Televising Democracies*
with a foreword by Bernard Weatherhill

London: Routledge, 1992. stg. £35.00, stg£11.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 07021 X; ISBN 0415 0702 28 (pbk)

Brian Farrell

Now that it is on the air, it is difficult to imagine why there was so much fuss about televising parliament. That an older generation should fear that a cherished institution would somehow be transformed may be forgiven as simple nostalgia. That entrenched conservatives (irrespective of party) should resist an innovation likely to force change on a club in which they have grown comfortable is understandable enough. Douglas Hogg's plaintive cry 'Parliament is a wonderful and unique institution and I want to keep it as it is' was echoed thirty years later by David Amess. We have trivialized our proceedings and members of future Parliaments will never know how this place used to be.' Both are quoted in this new collection of essays on *Televising Democracies*, edited by Bob Franklin.

Although the title is somewhat misleading (twelve of the fifteen chapters deal with the British Commons) this is a volume that will interest Irish media students. A great deal of the concerns considered and the solutions devised in Britain were subsequently rehearsed in the decision to admit cameras on a regular basis into Leinster House. In Ireland, as in Britain, there were suspicions of the established media as some kind of hostile force and a desire to keep Dáil broadcasting separate from 'ordinary' broadcasting. Undoubtedly that influenced the decision not to award the contract to RTE at least as much as any ideological tussle between supporters of private enterprise and proponents of public service (although RTE's case was not helped by its original rather casual submission to the Dail committee). In Ireland, as in Britain, there were worries that the impact of television might in some way subvert the particular role of parliament.

The truth is that much of the sacredness that surrounds parliamentary proceedings constitutes a liturgy cloaking an empty tabernacle. The ritual of votes and questions to ministers maintains the illusion of a governmental system answerable to the people's assembly. It might have served some purpose while that power existed. It has remained part of a cherished myth long after the executive has gained a virtual monopoly of power. The cabinet is no longer, in Bagehot's famous phrase, 'a hyphen which joins, a buckle which fastens the legislative part of the state to the executive part of the state.' It is much more than a 'combining committee.' It is, both in Britain and Ireland, the master of the representative assembly.

Of course there are tiffs. Major's travail in pushing Maastricht in the Commons is a good recent example – and, incidentally, it is difficult to blame television for the determination of the Euro-sceptics to press their point. But, with such rare exceptions, most of the time it is government business that takes up the greater part of parliament's time and activity; it is government legislation that is usually debated and invariably passed. It is the government that holds the whip hand. It controls proceedings in the ultimate, determines the time-table and usually the duration of parliament. Constitutional purists might wish to qualify such a sweeping set of generalisations; they can scarcely deny the main thrust of this description of the power relationship.

What is true of the 'Mother of Parliaments' in Westminster is equally true of what Basil Chubb has termed her 'daughter-in-law', comfortably settled in Dublin. Despite a written constitution and solemn notions about the separation of powers, the Dáil rarely manages to escape cabinet control. Even minority governments, with a little care and patience, can manage affairs; there were only six defeats, essentially on minor issues, for the Haughey government between 1987-89. After all, the threat that another defeat might be followed by dissolution remains a potent weapon: in 1989, twenty seven sitting deputies lost their seats, in 1992, the number rose to thirty two (in neither case allowing for deputies who decided to retire).

It is necessary to insist on this centrality of cabinet power in considering the question of televising parliament. For all their sense of their own self importance, parliaments are not as important as they might wish. In considerable measure this can be attributed to their failure to adapt to change: change in politics, in society, in the nature of media coverage. The procedures that were appropriate to a more leisurely age, when politics was the preserve of a small elite and deference protected them from prying eyes, have little efficacy in the 1990s. For those who are serious about parliamentary (and, with it, governmental) reform, the camera may be the very tool required to achieve action.

Certainly that was understood by some who contributed to the debate on the introduction of television. There were points made about the possible impact of the camera on the behaviour of members: that they would not just dress up, but act up. Fears reported in this collection from London are easily matched by comparable doubts in Dublin. In the 1990 Dáil debate on the motion accepting televising of the Dail, it was a former television journalist, Ted Nealon (who had been covering the Dail as a reporter since 1954) who argued:

> This development is the most important, dramatic and fundamental change in Dáil procedures during my long time here. It is undoubtedly progress but it is also – as has been pointed – fraught with danger. Dáil Deputies in future will act for the camera. All Deputies are actors at heart, they yearn for the acclaim of an audience.

A British backbencher and television presenter offers a more optimistic view, based on the Commons experience. Austin Mitchell suggests neither the worst fears of the pessimists, nor the exaggerated claims of the TV training and charm schools, have been realized.

> All the studies that have been done are perfectly correct in describing Commons TV as a success, even if their tone is that of the anxious teacher trying to congratulate a dull and recalcitrant child on how clever he has been in becoming toilet trained – at eight.

The truth is that, even had parliamentarians been less circumspect, the broadcasting authorities would have been prudent. Without any formal rules, broadcasting executives would instinctively accept the ITN memo during the experimental coverage of the Lords: 'it would be unwise to use shots of peers asleep' (quoted in the essay by Glyn Mathias). At the same time, the present restrictions on the use of cutaway reaction shots, wide shots and virtual prohibition of any visual presentation of what the Dáil Rules of

Coverage call cases of disorder and unparliamentary behaviour' are crying out for a more liberal interpretation.

Some of the other issues raised in Franklin's book also have a bearing on parliamentary television in Ireland. One is the urgent need for a major revision of procedures. It was a point stressed by many of the more thoughtful speakers both in London and Dublin. John Bruton, recognized as a driving force in Dáil reform made the particular point regarding the need to change established rulings on raising matters of urgency. It is manifestly absurd for an audience to see deputies ruled out of order in the Dáil when raising issues they have already discussed that day on radio and will, no doubt, rehearse again on television that night. The Ceann Comhairle himself was recently driven to making a statement from the chair on this matter, noting that he is bound by the existing Standing Orders and established rulings. In this regard, those who insisted that procedural reform and television must go hand in hand have been proved correct. Television has exposed what has been evident to informed insiders for decades: that much of what might be termed parliamentary mumbo-jumbo is just that – a vain attempt to hang on to the trappings of long-lost power – and a failure to facilitate parliament in what it does best: monitoring, criticizing and maintaining some vestigial influence on the behaviour of the executive.

These and many other matters are raised in this somewhat uneven but welcome volume. They include the question of dedicating a special channel to continuous live coverage, discussed throughout these essays but especially in Brian Lamb's 'The American experience: C-SPAN and the US Congress.' Apart from questions of cost and the extent of public interest, such a development would demand resolution of the issue of privilege, particularly in respect of witnesses appearing before Dáil committees. Plenty of material here for research students looking for topics, particularly since, in one respect at least, those who resisted the televising of parliament were right: things could never be the same again after cameras were introduced.

Peter Feeney, Editor, Current Affairs, RTE Television.

Tim Congdon et al *Paying for Broadcasting: the Handbook*

London: Routledge, 1992. stg£18.00 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 08938 7

Peter Feeney

The opening sentence in the book *Paying for Broadcasting: The Handbook* asks the question 'What is the role for the BBC in the year 2000?' It is a pertinent question given the central importance the BBC plays in broadcasting in the United Kingdom. It is also a very important question to ask in Ireland given that two-thirds of Irish viewers have access to BBC television and that so much of the structure of broadcasting in Ireland is based on the British model. The book was commissioned by the BBC as a contribution to the BBC's forward planning process. Its contributors are independent economists and media consultants. It is an admirable undertaking which provides an objective prediction of what the broadcasting marketplace is likely to be in seven years from now.

The contributors make clear that the imperative for change in broadcasting comes from technological development rather than a change in public attitudes. However underlying much of the debate is the acceptance that the political toleration of public service monopoly and control has greatly diminished over the last ten years. There is no irredentist looking back to the glory years of the BBC's domination. Rather there is a hard-nosed acceptance of change and a recognition that data is needed to inform decisions that will significantly influence the shape of broadcasting to come.

The technological change that is anticipated in the book has already happened to a considerable degree in Ireland. The arrival of cable, satellite and video rental is far more advanced than in the United Kingdom. However the economic impact of these changes in Ireland has not yet happened to a significant extent. Therefore many of the conclusions arrived at in the predictions for the United Kingdom are likely to be mirrored in Ireland in the coming decade. This is not to say that RTE has not already felt the impact of the much more competitive environment that exists in Ireland. The loss of market share to British competition through terrestrial and cable television, the refusal of government to increase the annual licence fee since 1986 and the attempts to limit RTE's share of the advertising revenue are all developments that impact on television broadcasting in Ireland. The monopoly position that RTE continues to have in terms of Irish television broadcasting is just one of the issues that will inevitably remain as part of political debate in this country in the coming years. *Paying for Broadcasting* provides much useful data and predictions that can inform the parallel debate that needs to happen this side of the Irish Sea if broadcasting is to be determined by concerns other than purely commercial considerations and political expediency.

The longest section in the book is given over to the issue of subscription as an alternative to the licence fee as the major source of BBC funding. Subscription would mean the positive decision to take and to pay for BBC as opposed to the current system whereby every household that has a television must compulsorily pay for a television licence. The authors point out that already in the United Kingdom 71.5 per cent of households have a VCR and spend an average of £4.50 per month on video software. In addition nine per cent have satellite dishes and one per cent have cable television. They conclude therefore that there is already a wide acceptance of subscription television. The critical question they ask is what percentage of households would voluntarily pay for their BBC signal and what level of payment would be acceptable. The authors cite three recent surveys that asked these questions. Unfortunately the results of the surveys are inconclusive. The authors do however point out that fewer people would be willing to subscribe to BBC2, that some households would no longer have access at all to BBC and that subscription television revenue is much more expensive to collect than licence television revenue.

Any lessons from this discussion that might be applied to Ireland are somewhat tenuous. However, optimistic predictions that the BBC could raise an equivalent amount of revenue from subscription as opposed to licence fees are unlikely to have equal force in the Irish context. Over 60 per cent of the Irish television viewing audience is used to having free access to BBC television. If the licence fee were to be abolished in both Britain and Ireland then the viewer would have to pay considerably more to gain access to both BBC and RTE. There is every likelihood that a significant proportion of households would not choose to pay for both British and Irish television. In these circumstances RTE's overall revenue would suffer as some homes would opt not to take RTE.

The book is inevitably inconclusive. Indeed the debate within the United Kingdom has become more favourable to the BBC since the authors were commissioned. Despite the absence of conclusions it is a highly provocative piece of work. Throughout the book one sees parallels with the Irish situation. As the reviewer is someone who works in public service television and believes in the values underlying RTE's output reassurance is found in the book's conclusion. The book concludes that even in a more commercially driven market there would still be a need for public service broadcasting to maintain quality output, to provide a centre of excellence, to widen the viewers' choice, to provide universal coverage and to influence for the good the commercial sector. Here is a challenge for all public service television people wherever they are.

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Reporters Sans Frontières *Freedom of the Press Throughout the World – 1992 Report*

London: John Libby, 1992. 256pp. stg£12.00 (pbk)
ISBN 086196 369 5

Peadar Kirby

If any proof is needed that the printed and broadcast word can still be powerful, none better could be provided than through reading this highly informative report. For, in its survey of the media situation in 121 countries, it tells a grim tale of death and torture, imprisonment and harassment against both media proprietors and journalists. But, even more tellingly for our situation in Ireland, it also details the more subtle pressures brought to bear by those with both political and economic vested interests and the climate of self-censorship that can result.

Reporters sans Frontières, a monitoring and lobbying organization with sections in Montpellier, Paris, Barcelona and Lausanne and members in more than 40 countries, lists 1,445 infringements of press freedom during 1991 involving 1,480 journalists in the 121 countries it covers, which do not include Ireland. At least 72 journalists were killed in 21 countries while exercising their profession and, on 1 January 1992, 121 journalists were in prison. The civil war in Yugoslavia claimed the lives of 20 media representatives, making it more deadly in six months than the 21 years of the Vietnam War.

Added to this frightful litany is the sorry tale of censorship, of government interference and of harassment which make journalism a particularly hazardous profession in many countries. In Egypt, for example, journalists who deviate from the tight official line are subject to harassment, imprisonment and torture. In Mexico, where 52 journalists have been murdered since 1982, the report states: 'Although several of these killings were the work of ordinary criminals, others were committed by policemen or financed by officials hoping to gain favour with the president's office' (p.142). In Malawi, publishing the president's age is punishable by five years in prison, while in the United Arab Emirates two leading dailies were banned for a year after printing an advertisement referring to alcohol. In some countries, such harassment extends even to consumers of the media: in Haiti, three people were killed when troops opened fire on a group of 26 people caught listening to a US radio station while in Myanmar (formerly Burma) reading an opposition newspaper is punishable by a jail sentence.

But the pressures which curtail media freedom can be far more subtle. These include the practice of government officials and politicians favouring and pampering some journalists while ostracizing others. The report describes the practice in Japan:

> Ministries, big firms and important institutions have their own clubs, including a press room, and accredit a certain number of journalists, giving them access to official information, reports, statements and 'secrets'. The reporters concerned then reach agreement on what should or should not be published. The journalist who ignores these 'rules' and exposes a scandal is liable to be thrown out of the club, cutting off his or her newspaper from official sources (p.109).

The report details some huge sums paid to bribe journalists in Japan while, in the section on South Korea, reference is made to a report by the Korea Press Institute stating that 93 per cent of journalists eke out a living by supplementing their income with bribes!

Other such subtle pressures referred to include concentration of media ownership, the use of libel laws to curb journalists and withdrawal of advertising revenue. The extent to which the media is dependent on such revenue is detailed in the section on the United States where a drop in advertising led to layoffs of 200 employees in *The New*

York Times, 105 journalists by the Time Warner group and 90 news staff by ABC television. As a result, the 'colourless, odourless' approach to reporting, as the report describes the media in Luxembourg (p.128), could with accuracy be extended to describe much of the media in the so-called developed world.

This report's view of press freedom and the forces which militate against it is, then, refreshingly broad, forcing us to look critically at our own media as well as decrying the more naked forms of abuse to which the media is subject elsewhere. It also raises some important issues about press freedom. For example, the report disabuses us of the notion that replacing an obviously tyrannical government with a democratically elected one may be sufficient to ensure safeguards. It recounts how in Lithuania the Sajudis government is seeking to curb the press in ways reminiscent of the former communist government while President Landsbergis, upset by cartoonists' portrayals, is seeking a ban on 'personal attacks in political drawings,' the report says (p 126). Even more challenging is the lengthy report on the situation in Yugoslavia which shows that the media is not always a reluctant victim of outside forces but can willingly be a mouthpiece for the most racist and violent attitudes. 'Almost all the Croatian and Serbian media became a tool for military and nationalist brainwashing, often after a 'clean-out' of the most independent voices (p.224).

Ireland is not alone in being excluded from this report. Also not covered are all the Scandinavian countries, for example. However, many of the issues which might be mentioned in a survey of the media situation here are present. Problems such as self-censorship receive regular mention, while the predilection of the President of Panama for libel actions against the press, the tapping of a senior journalist's phone by the Maldives government and the problems in Bulgaria created by the monopolization of distribution, all show that our problems in Ireland are not unique. While the report makes grim reading, it also gives one faith in the resilience, courage and creativity of the media in the face of threats. A former newspaper editor was released in Morocco in September 1991 after 17 years in prison; he was thought to be Africa's longest-serving political prisoner. In Panama, the media reacted to President Endara's legal proceedings against a newspaper cartoon by a five-week 'cartoon war' publishing vicious cartoons almost daily until the president withdrew his legal complaint. And, as the report mentions about a number of countries, especially in Africa, the media is playing a key role in the transition from dictatorships to more democratic forms of government.

Vincent Price *Public Opinion*

London: Sage, 1992. stg£6.95
ISBN 08039-4023-8

Michael Laver, Professor of Political Science, Trinity College, Dublin.

Michael Laver

The slim volume is fourth in a Sage series on 'communication concepts' – others published or planned are concerned with explication, information, gatekeeping, pornography, news negotiation and ritual. The aim of each volume is to introduce readers in general terms to 'enduring concepts' in communication studies, looking at their pedigree, their current usage and the issues arising from them. Each is designed to be the first thing to read for someone who intends to work within a particular field with which they are currently unfamiliar.

The general idea may sound hackneyed, but Price's introduction to the concept of public opinion shows that it is still possible to add something interesting and distinctive at the same time as introducing neophytes to the wonders of a new concept. Where he succeeds very well is in the linking of an intellectual history of the concept of public opinion with a discussion of the current debates and methodological dilemmas that any thinking practitioner must come to terms with.

Public opinion as a concept came into the mainstream of public discourse in the France of the 1780s – though its first use has been credited to Rousseau around 1744. The meaning of the term was often rather vague and public opinion could implicitly only be inferred by the intellectuals who wrote about it. Essentially a liberal idea, the notion of public opinion was refined and developed by Benthan and Mill. For the next 150 years or so, development of the concept of public opinion was driven by theoretical debates over democratic decision making. One of the key issues, still important today, had to do with whether public opinion comprised an aggregation of the opinions of individual members of the public or whether it was something inherently more collective, something that could not be reduced to its individual parts.

A radical change in the intellectual direction of the notion of public opinion was brought about by scientific developments in random sampling and survey research. Successes in predicting the outcome of the 1936 presidential election in the US gave credibility to 'scientific' public opinion research – giving many confidence in the validity of findings on public attitudes on a wide range of matters that are not subject to direct verification. More general conceptual debates have subsequently tended to take a back seat to debates over (albeit fundamental) more technical issues about the reliability and validity of different methods of surveying particular attitudes and opinions.

Most of us these days tend to think of public opinion research in such relatively technical terms and Price's book is a very effective antidote to this overly narrow view of the matters. By raising and reviewing broader conceptual issues, he not only provides a general introduction to the subject for newcomers, but he also provides experienced and sometimes jaded public opinion hacks with much-needed food for thought. The issues raised are not new, but they are relevant, and rarely presented in such a concise and accessible way.

Denis McQuail, Professor of Mass Communications, University of Amsterdam.

K.B. Jensen & N.W. Jankowski, eds *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication*

London: Routledge, 1991 stg£35.00, stg£10.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 05404 4;ISBN 0415 05405 2 (pbk)

Denis McQuail

This book is not what it seems: sometimes it is more, sometimes less, more often more than less. It is not really a handbook, although from time to time there are attempts in the chapters written by the editors to provide some sort of systematic treatment of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. It seems rather as if the very nature of the 'qualitative' approach to communication research, or perhaps of its practitioners, defies the requirements of system, comprehensiveness and cook-book answers to questions which the notion of a handbook implies. As a result, the logic of the book requires some decoding, since it is not altogether clear from the preface and introduction or the formal structure of the contents. Again, there may be some reluctance on the the part of qualitative researchers to get pinned down too closely, especially when alternative readings are always possible.

The book is premised on a fundamental division between 'qualifiers' and 'quantifiers' and it goes some way to explaining how the division is constituted and why it exists. The definition of the 'qualitative' approach leans heavily on a clear view of the quantitative alternative (concerned primarily with information, recurrence, measurement, experimentation). The words used to refer to the qualitative approach are: meaning, interpretation, particularity experience, exegesis, process. Qualitative research requires

'thick' (or deep) description and the interpretation of ongoing and complex social experience and process, especially as this is understood by those involved. It is scarcely possible to lay down rules of qualitative method, although there is much to be said (and is said in the book) about the attitude called for on the part of an investigator and about the strategies which are available and desirable.

The editors take as their starting point the view that a more qualitative approach has gained significant ground from a former dominant, positivistic, model of communication research. At the same time, the book is no polemic against quantification (quite different, for instance, from the 'abandoning method' school of twenty years ago) and most contributors seem committed to peaceful cooperation rather than warfare. The qualitative approach is represented more as an enlargement than a complete substitute for traditional methods. Between them the two editors represent two wings of the present-day qualitative school, one of which has its origins in the humanities and the other in the social sciences (twenty years ago, the two were barely on speaking terms).

Two substantial chapters are devoted to the intellectual history of the two streams. Klaus Bruhn Jensen, in what is probably the most complex chapter in the book describes and explains the nature and development of the humanistic branch from literary studies, through semiology and structuralism and cultural studies. His treatment of methodology is largely confined to comments on linguistic discourse analysis and the need to develop methods of visual communication. He ends with a plea for a 'social semiotics', whose essence is described as follows:

> Discourse is conceived of as genres with specific uses in social practice; subjectivity is defined in collective rather than individual terms, as the expression of socially situated interpretive repertories; and context is related to the specific historical setting (p.43).

The treatment by Jankowski and Wester of the qualitative (interpretative) tradition in 'social science inquiry' (it is really sociology) takes us fairly systematically through a discussion of the early Chicago School, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and ethnography. In their recommendations about methodology, Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory, participant observation and 'triangulation' (multi-methods) take a central position. It is useful to have this reminder of a rich theoretical research tradition within sociology which long predated the efforts of literary and cultural scholars to come to grips with the everyday practices of media communicators and audiences. Some of the culturalist efforts at media research have been marked by ignorance rather than amnesia in this respect and there has been too much duplication of theoretical effort.

The core part of the book and that which makes it much more than 'just' a handbook (though it would be no bad thing to have one) consists of a series of chapters by diverse pathbreaking and successful communication researchers who have used a range of different 'qualitative methodologies'. They are united at least by not having used surveys, experimental methods or complex statistical analysis. The names and chapter topics largely tell us what we need to know about the substance of the book: Tuchman on news; Newcomb on television drama; van Dijk on news discourse; Larsen on media fiction; Jensen on reception analysis; Morley and Silverstone on audience ethnography; Jankowski on community media; Schudson on history; Lang and Lang on events in natural settings; Green on media education. It is understandable why this set of authors are unlikely to have delivered conventional 'handbook' entries on their fields of work. Less predictable is that these authors have all more or less equally risen to the challenge of saying something fresh and illuminating about their own methodological approaches. This is the pleasant surprise of the book, which, at first sight, looks to cover familiar territory. One example is Kurt and Gladys Lang's reminder that their famous discovery of the difference between the television (pre) definition of the McArthur parade in Chicago and the perception of actual spectators came about by accident. Not that serendipity is confined to qualitative research, but the qualitative 'frame of mind' is more likely to be continuously open for discovery.

The book is written from a European perspective, but not narrowly or exclusively so, as the names of contributors make clear. It is written at a fairly high level of generality and is hardly a book for beginners, but is a satisfying book for media researchers, young or old, useful to have to hand or to browse through. The diverse range of references alone are well worth having. In conclusion, it may be worth recalling a discussion of this general question by K.E. Rosengren in a seminal volume, *Rethinking Communication* (Sage, 1989), in which he asserted emphatically that 'Qualitative methods by no means have to be less rigorous than quantitative' (p.27). This book is certainly compiled in the spirit of that comment, although some of the problems of combining qualitative with quantitative could have been given more attention.

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Barrie Gunter and Mallory Wober *The Reactive Viewer*

London: John Libbey, 1992. 128pp stg£18.00.
ISBN 0 86196 358X

Justin Lewis, *The Ideological Octopus: An Exploration of Television and its Audience*

London: Routledge, 1991. stg£35.00, stg£8.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 902878 ISBN 0415 90288 6

David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*

London: Routledge, 1992. 325pp
ISBN 041505 4443

Brian O'Neill

According to Barrie Gunter and Mallory Wober in *The Reactive Viewer*, the changing broadcasting and media environment has given rise to a growing need for 'enhanced forms of audience assessment'. It seems curious that with the technological innovations that have accompanied expanded consumer choice in television, the television industry itself still relies on a relatively crude form of audience measurement for making decisions about what is broadcast and when. The fact that television ratings – the measurement of audience size and demographic characteristics – are still universally adhered to is a result of the unique consensus that has built up within the industry between product advertisers, programme planners, and advertising agencies. But, as the authors argue, ratings themselves do not constitute a good basis for assessing the actual popularity of a programme and, in an environment where programme quality has become just as important as a wide audience reach, there is a pressing need for advertisers and television executives to know more about not just what viewers are watching but how they are watching.

The purpose of this monograph is to review a growing body of research dedicated to qualitative measurement of audience response and reaction to programmes. *The Reactive Viewer* contains a comprehensive account of the development of what is technically known as 'appreciation measurement' in the UK, the country where such research was pioneered, sponsored by both the BBC audience research department and the IBA (now ITC-Independent Television Commission). There are also chapters dealing with similar research in the US, where it has enjoyed far less support from the industry, and a number of other countries like Canada, Australia and Holland which have also attempted forms of qualitative indexing with varying degrees of success. The whole thrust of this research is towards the development of an Appreciation Index (AI) or score

which reflects how interesting and/or enjoyable viewers find programmes. In the UK, AI's are now regularly used (though not published) in conjunction with TVR's in programme planning and schedule evaluation. Some of the most interesting research documented by Gunter and Wober concerns the relationships between appreciation level, programme popularity and viewing behaviour. Party political broadcasts, perhaps not surprisingly, feature among the least popular and lowest evaluated programmes while classical music programmes with sometimes very small audiences tend to be very highly appreciated by their audiences. Some programme types (plays, single documentaries, films, for example) can exhibit a high degree of variation in the appreciation they are accorded while programmes of a serial nature and in particular those continuous serials with very loyal audiences will retain stable levels of appreciation over long periods of time.

The Reactive Viewer from the John Libbey Media Library is one in an excellent series of research monographs sponsored by the ITC which make available to the industry and to academic institutions a range of technical literature on audience research. Such research is, of course, geared to the needs of those in the industry who are responsible for planning schedules or buying and selling advertising space. Outside of this circle, there are many who would question the quantitative paradigm under which it is carried out – the legitimacy of measuring audience response – and what would appear to be the many self-fulfilling prophecies that such research generates – that people like and enjoy what they see, that loyal viewers are appreciative viewers and so on.

Justin Lewis' *The Ideological Octopus* functions as something of a primer for doing audience research though of a different type to that of Gunter and Wober. This is the type of research that characterises what has been called 'the qualitative turn' of some recent social science and communications studies. Lewis presents us with a reconstruction of some of the traditions that inform what he calls the 'new audience research'. Part 1 of the book takes him through a somewhat sketchy and potted history of effects studies, uses and gratifications research, cultural studies, semiology as well as a brief consideration of ethnography, discourse analysis and postmodernism as important resources for the contemporary audience researcher. There is a short methodology section covering quantitative and qualitative approaches, surveys, various types of interviews and focus groups with a useful discussion of how to deal with the practical problems of handling large amounts of audience data. The problem here is that Lewis tries to deal with too much material in too short a space, a function perhaps of the rather grandiose agenda of the book to account for the ideological impact of television on society.

Part 2 of the book comprises two practical audience studies: one a study of audience readings of an edition of the ITN *News at Ten* and the other an analysis of different audience reactions to *The Cosby Show*. In both cases, while respondents were chosen from a diverse range of occupational backgrounds, the analysis is concerned less with accounting for differential demographic responses than with looking at the relationship between the discourses that structured people's views of the world and how they read television programmes. With regard to the news study, Lewis finds that most audience members generally do not pick up what the news producers intended in their reports and claims that the general abandonment by television news of traditional narrative codes leads to its ultimate failure to communicate – a form of cognitive dissonance between what we see and hear. The second study uses *The Cosby Show* for analyzing discourses of gender, class and race as they are appropriated by audience members. Audiences are shown to react to the show in a variety of ways: some respond positively to the progressive portrayal of blacks in a prime time show while others respond in an essentially colourblind fashion to what they see as an average, everyday American family. There is, according to Lewis, a powerful ideological message at work in *The Cosby Show* but not one that can be directly associated with the preferred reading of the text. The ideological message of the programme is clothed in the language of the 'American Dream' but is all the more powerful for the ambiguous method of its

presentation in which it can speak directly to people of diverse backgrounds and race emphasizing different elements of class, race or discourse at different times. Arguably, this is what makes a popular television programme: one that has the ability to speak to many different types of people at the same time. The important conclusion to be drawn, however, from this type of research is that the univocal, ideologically dominant power of the text has been much overstated and that the task for researchers now is to examine in closely-observed, detailed fashion the spaces between text and context with far less emphasis on building macrostructures of ideological influence.

An author who certainly fits the bill in this respect and one of the most important names in the 'new audience research' is David Morley whose recently published *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* brings together a representative selection of his work over the last 12 years. Morley's achievement is an impressive one by any standards and this volume contains excerpts from the empirical work which comprised the *Nationwide* Audience study (1980), the Family Television study (1986) and the on-going study into the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) which originated in collaboration with Roger Silverstone at Brunel University. In addition to this empirical work which forms the heart of Morley's achievement, the present volume contains a number of other papers and essays demonstrating the serious intellectual engagement that has always characterized his work.

There is an interesting development to be seen in this volume from Morley's initial concern with ideology, hegemony and preferred readings in texts to questions about the class basis of decoding television and then to broader issues of the gendered framework of family television viewing practices. This shift has involved, according to Morley, a move away from television as the focus of interest towards a consideration of a range of communications technologies and their role in the construction of national and cultural identities. This broadening field of vision has in part reflected the changes and growing sophistication of cultural studies but equally it shows Morley's intellectual achievement in a more singular light. In a stimulating introduction to the book, David Morley gives us an insight into his own very much sociological concerns in audience studies and in this respect characterizes his position in this burgeoning field as a quite particular and even perhaps marginal one. Thus there are a number of attempts by Morley to distance himself from the excesses of psychoanalytic theories of readership and cultural studies, particularly of the American variety, all of which have had difficulty with empirical work and sociological investigation. Ultimately, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* stands as an eloquent defence of practical audience investigation and the need for a sociological perspective within audience studies from one of its leading proponents.

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Michael Leapman *Treacherous Estate – The Press after Fleet Street*

London: Hodder and Stoughton 1992, stg£18.99
ISBN 0-340-57742-8

Carole O'Reilly

The title of this book is based on *Dangerous Estate* by Francis Williams (1957) – an early account of the British newspaper industry. The author, Michael Leapman, is a former journalist on both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and is accomplished in this field. He has been instrumental in attempting to guide critical media studies towards questions of media ownership and control. These questions form the subject matter of the book.

It is true to say that the last thirty five years have been ones of unprecedented change for the newspaper industry. This change has been largely the responsibility of

the new press magnates like Robert Maxwell, Eddy Shah and Rupert Murdoch. All of these receive due attention in the book, along with newer arrivals such as David Stevens and Conrad Black. These owners are rather more interventionist and less politically sophisticated than the old-style press barons like Lords Beaverbrooke and Northcliffe.

With the aid of new technology and increasing conglomerate ownership, newspapers have become part of larger corporations. The new owners have tended to treat their acquisitions as just another part of their wide-ranging business interests. The implications of this have been a greater emphasis on increasing circulation and profit-making rather than on the investigative role of newspapers. Increased competition for a smaller and more exclusive share of the advertising cake has meant that newspaper content has become more homogeneous across the board. This has resulted in most newspapers scrambling for the precious middle ground.

The book also outlines the new owners' propensity to use their acquisitions to fight their own battles both political and corporate. Rupert Murdochs newspapers have indulged in staunch support for the British Conservative party particularly during the Thatcher years. Tiny Rowland's *The Observer* has long pursued his old business enemies, the Egyptian Al Fayed brothers. This conflict of interest operates to curtail the scope of a neswspaper's business and political reporting. In a deeply ironic opening to a chapter on the new tycoons Leapman quotes Conrad Black on journalists: 'A great many of them are irresponsible. They have huge power and many of them are extremely reckless.' This quote perhaps could be more accurately applied to the owners themselves as most journalists and editors are only as reckless as their owners will allow.

The newspapers' pursuit of the British Royals is well documented here. The 1980s began a decade of obsession with the doings of the younger Royals like Princess Diana and the Duchess of York. The 1990s have so far been characterized by the much-publicized demise of three Royal marriages. These have been covered in great detail by the press, including the broadsheets who have found a thirst for such material not confined to tabloid readers alone. The relationship between the press and the Royal family raises the question of attempts to control the activities of the newspapers. Leapman labels the woefully inadequate Press Complaints Commission as a 'watchdog with false teeth' and notes that the dilemma of possible government controls on the press 'may be incapable of resolution' (p.220). This is where some of the contradictions of trying to limit the press lie. Any restraints that may be applied to protect the vulnerable may also serve to cushion the powerful.

By far the most interesting chapter of the book is that which deals with the flight of the British newspaper industry from Fleet Street to the newly-developed Docklands. This covers the very first attempt to publish a newspaper without using printers' labour. This move was instigated by Eddy Shah and his *Today* newspaper, and finally integrated into modern newspaper publishing by Rupert Murdoch after his move to Wapping. This move and its effects on the journalists (both those who resigned and those who stayed) and on the print unions (NGA and SOGAT) is tactfully and sensitively recorded by Leapman. Such developments inspired a remarkable rush to launch new titles. Newspapers such as *Today*, *The Independent*, *The Sunday Correspondent* and the *London Daily News* all emerged in the late 1980s, with only the former two surviving to date. The escape from Fleet Street to the Docklands symbolized the move from old production methods to new; from the power of the print unions to the power of the owners. No industry can hope to undergo such remarkable change unscathed and so it is here.

This book serves well as a layperson's guide to the recent trends in press ownership. It is clearly intended for a broad spectrum of the market – media students, journalists, teachers and anyone with an interest in media and communications. This has meant that the book is written in a clear, chronological and easily readable style. The negative side of this is the book's failure to put the current state of the press into any identifiable theoretical context. As noted earlier, critical media theory has only recently begun to take note of the significance of ownership trends. A growing field like critical theory has

much to add to this debate. The book fails to put the conglomerization of the press into a wider global context. Conglomerization is an important feature of modern monopoly capitalism – the growth in the number of mergers and takeovers and the increase in cross-media ownership throughout Europe (Silvio Berlusconi in Italy) and America (Ted Turner).

A terrible beauty was born from behind the barbed wire at Wapping and the picket lines at Warrington (base of Eddy Shah). The beauty of the clean, noise-free technology of modern newspaper production serves as a veneer to hide the beasts of rationalization, increased competition for the same market share and the profit-led instincts of the new tycoons. This book adds another warning voice to the growing unease about the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few. Such warnings have, so far, gone largely unheeded while the threat to a free and independent press intensifies.

Terry Prone, Managing Director of Carr Communications Ltd., and former member of the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC).

Vincent Porter and Suzanne Hasselbach *Pluralism, Politics and the Marketplace: The Regulation of German Broadcasting*

London: Routledge, 1991. stg£30.00
ISBN 0415 05394 3

Terry Prone

The scale was different. The challenges, oddly, were the same. The de-regulation of much German broadcasting from the mid-1980s onwards, was a massive and complex achievement. The end result of that de-regulation, together with the sudden availability of newer technological options, is that the post-war pattern of broadcasting in Germany has been radically changed. Many of the same pressures and objectives were in play when the Irish Government set about recognizing the reality which had been illustrated for several preceding years by the presence - and by the success - of pirate radio stations. There was the same concern about the impact on culture and social life of a move away from an officially sanctioned and nationally funded monopoly (in the Irish situation) and from a duopoly, in Germany's case, represented by the public broadcasters ARD and ZDF.

The new broadcasting order in Germany was driven by two significant judgements of the Federal Constitutional Court which, in effect, set out the new dual approach which would see public and private broadcasters sharing the airwaves. However, if those judgements provided the foundation stones for the new service, the shape of the eventual structure emerged through the interplay of a large number of bodies and of interests, including the Federal Government, the major political parties, and the private media groups, including the publishing and film industries. The authors point out:

> Increasingly, however, broadcasting is also an international business, and the Competition Directorate of the Commission of the European Communities, and the directive on transfrontier television of the European Council of Ministers have also influenced broadcasting regulation in the FRG.

It arguably helped the task that the FRG's broadcasting system, despite its size, was not a huge monolith to start with, partly because, at the end of the Second World War, the western allies had been at pains to break up the centralized system of the Third Reich into smaller units.

When the Irish broadcasting system was de-monopolized, the precedent set by the pirate radio stations in a sense defined the agenda. There was considerable concern -

and there still is considerable concern - lest 'local' radio be merely a purveyor of popular music delivered in a manner, tone and formula proven successful elsewhere, with each station's output virtually indistinguishable from the output of its nearest and furthest neighbours. We had seen the future, and we knew it could be businesslike and banal.

In Germany, the concern was a more sophisticated one. There was a belief that broadcasting was too important to be left to politicians to sort out, and that radio and television were not only crucial to pluralism and to societal communication, but potentially dangerous in their capacity to homogenize thinking and to marginalize the already marginalized. The issue tended to centre on a consideration of broadcasting as an informer and catalyst of individual and public opinion, to be structured and monitored so as to ensure that the information and insights reaching the listener were complex, rather than representative of any dominant group.

Porter and Hasselbach trace the economic and political influences which led to the current situation in Germany's broadcasting world, examine the conflict between public and private broadcasting and the impact of the EC's competition policies on this area. Porter is Deputy Director and Hasselbach Research Fellow in Broadcasting and Telecommunications at the Centre for Communication and Information Studies at the Polytechnic of Central London.

The book is clearly supported by a substantial body of research, matched by an understanding of the complexity of the German broadcasting regimen which is impressive. The hand of the editor in the volume is perhaps a touch too light. Certain sectiorls of the book are written with limpid lucidity:

> The real innovation of private broadcasting is local radio. Local news and information clearly meet a need. Although radio competes with local newspapers, it is faster. Different teams of radio and newspaper journalists often compete with one another, even if they are frequently employed by the same publisher. But there have been reports of local radios simply using newspaper items without even mentioning the source; and much local news is often little more than announcements of forthcoming events.

Balance that against this:

> Article 9 of the Basic Law guarantees as civil rights the free formation of associations and public assembly. Power is divided vertically, through the principle of federalism, between the *Länder* and the *Bund*. Article 20 of the Basic Law separates horizontally the legislature, the executive and the judiciary; and Article 21 safeguards the free formation of political parties. The role of the eleven self-governing entities of the *Länder* is to maintain cultural, economic and historical diversity and to provide a check to the central legislature and government of the *Bund* in Bonn.

Had more latitude been granted to whichever of the two writers produced the first paragraph, the book might be less like a cinder-block of information, thickly dusted with acronyms.

Colum McCaffery, PhD.
Thesis, UCD 1992.

Political Communication and Broadcasting: Theory, Practice and Reform

Colum McCaffery

The origins of this research project lie in the writer's dissatisfaction with the growing library of work which frets aimlessly about the effects of broadcasting on political communication. Missing from the shelves, it is argued, is a clear statement of w is achievable by way of political communication. In other words, if television's contribution to political communication is to be criticized, a set of criteria - a specification - for adequate public debate is long overdue.

In order to make the project manageable and effective, it is confined to explicit political communication - the stuff of political debate and public controversy generally. That is to say, political communication is understood here to refer i) to messages openly aimed a eliciting support for a political point of view or for a party or candidate seeking elective office, and ii) to information necessary or useful to reaching decisions on lending such support. The question of implicit political communication contained in, say, drama is excluded.

The specification which is developed over two chapters amounts to a list of basic requirements which any democratic society might expect of its political communication system. The idea is that we will know what we mean when we speak of good political communication and what we want to achieve when we consider reforms. While the specification is developed through a study of four approaches to political communication - liberalism, pluralism, the Frankfurt School, and Marxist structuralism - there is no question of attempting to reduce diversity in political theory to just four approaches or to hammer irreconcilable viewpoints into a contrived consensus. The four approaches span the broad face of political and media theory even if they do not cover it. Moreover, the intention is not to develop an all-encompassing specification for political communication before which all will have to bend the knee. Rather the intention is to develop - by way of an in-depth consideration of a broad range of theory - a reasonable and credible ideal.

The specification which emerges is made up of particular requirements none of which are terribly radical. Taken as a set, however, they are comprehensive and demanding. They include requirements that political communication concern itself with arguments about alternative social goals instead of political news or even gossip, that the arguments be competent and readily understood, and that the interests they promote be made clear. There are requirements not only for freedom of expression and information but for positive dissemination of relevant information. There are also requirements for the presentation of diverse views and challenging alternatives. The outstanding feature of the specification is its emphasis on a discourse which is formal, contentious and reasoned. What is required is not just an absence of media manipulation but a framework in which the methods and conditions of debate can be improved.

There would be little point in prescribing all of this for an abstract, typical democracy. Instead Ireland is taken as a case in point in order to examine real possibilities and difficulties. A brief political history of Irish broadcasting is presented, followed by an evaluation of existing Irish controls on broadcast politics - the broadcasting acts, institutions and legal devices, and guidelines which control broadcast politics. This history and evaluation together provide the background necessary for an informed attempt to reform politics, i.e. to deliver on the promise of the specification.

Attention then turns to a discussion of alternative approaches to reform and finally to detailed recommendations. The recommendations involve changes to the broadcasting

acts: firstly, to require that a reasonable proportion of news and current affairs be devoted to explicit political communication; secondly, to spell out what we require by way of political communication and broadcast coverage of public controversy generally (this supersede existing impartiality requirements); thirdly, with reference to Section 31, to permit coverage of the controversy over political violence in Ireland while simultaneously restricting the appearance of terrorists. Finally, the recommendations also involve freeing the Broadcasting Complaints Commission from present limitations and allowing it to become a forum for discussing and sorting out the practical implications of obligations on broadcasting. The recommendations tread the narrow ground between unrealistic changes which ignore commercial reality or existing conventions, and the smug assumption that nothing can be done or needs to be done. They offer a workable blueprint for reform.

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Notes for Contributors

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Studying the media within their political, cultural, economic and historical contexts, it seeks to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences, and to present information on new developments relevant to the field. International as well as national issues will be examined.

Irish Communications Review is divided into sections covering research reports, analytical articles, documents, statistical data, and book reviews. From time to time, it will contain visual, pictorial and photographic essays.

2. *Irish Communications Review* welcomes contributions from practitioners, academics and researchers. They should be addressed to the Editors, *Irish Communications Review*, Department of Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology, College of Commerce, Rathmines, Dublin 6, Ireland.

3. Contributions to the journal may be made under any of the following headings: a) Articles, normally 4,000 to 6,000 words, excluding tables, illustrations and references; b) Reports and commentary accompanying documents or data, 2,000 to 4,000 words; c) Book reviews, not exceeding 1,000 words; d) Thesis abstracts, 500-700 words; and e) Pictorial, photographic and visual essays. While we welcome unsolicited book reviews, potential reviewers should consult the editors before undertaking a review.

Publication is not automatic, and all editorial decisions are taken by the editors with relevant advice where appropriate. All contributions will be acknowledged.

4. Contributions must not have been published elsewhere with substantially the same content or simultaneously be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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British spelling should be used. The text should be sub-divided by section headings where appropriate.

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7. References, under the heading 'References', should be placed alphabetically at the end of the text. Multiple entries by an author or set of authors in the same year should be postscripted a,b,c (1988a, 1988b, 1988c), etc

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Sheehan, H. (1987) *Irish Television Drama. A Society and its Stories* Dublin: Radio Telefís Eireann.

Bell, D. (1992) 'Purely an Academic Matter: Relating Critical Theory and Production Practice within Media Studies', Irish Communications Review, 2:26-34.

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